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Feminism, Pacifism and Internationalism:  
The Women's International League,  
1915–1935

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Sarah Hellowell

PhD

2017



# Feminism, Pacifism and Internationalism: The Women's International League, 1915–1935

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Sarah Hellowell

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the  
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for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

This thesis examines the Women's International League (WIL) to explore the wider themes of feminism, pacifism and transnational activism during the Great War and the interwar years. WIL was formed in October 1915 as the British national section of what came to be known as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). The thesis interrogates the concept of feminist pacifism by analysing WIL's campaigns for peace, disarmament and international law alongside its pursuit of women's rights. The thesis also demonstrates the interplay between activism on the local, national and international stages. In chronological terms, the focus is on the first twenty years of WIL's activism: from the circumstances that led to its foundation in 1915 to the challenges faced in 1935 – a time when the political consensus within WILPF came under threat and when hopes that internationalism would secure peace began to fade.

The study comprises five chapters. The first explores the foundations of WIL and examines the methods it used to link its opposition to war to its feminist demands. The remaining chapters are thematic and cover the organisation's work during the interwar years. Chapter Two analyses WIL's campaigns for women's rights, including the nationality of married women and the debate over protective legislation. Chapter Three highlights the organisation's gendered approach to peace, including its campaigns for disarmament. Chapter Four investigates WIL's commitment to internationalism through an analysis of its organisational structure and its work at the transnational level. The final chapter examines how the organisation built and maintained a network of activists, exploring the shared interests between WIL and a range of other voluntary associations, including those working for peace, humanitarian relief, liberal internationalism and socialism.

This study firmly places WIL within British and international movements for peace and women's rights. Work by Leila Rupp, Marie Sandell and Karen Offen demonstrates the wealth of activism by and for women at the international level during the twentieth century. However, previous scholarship has not focussed on WIL in any depth. By offering a detailed analysis of this organisation, the thesis sheds light on a range of issues: the campaign for female citizenship and political participation; the connections between feminism and pacifism; the development of international organisations during the interwar years; and the nature of transnational women's activism.

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Before embarking on this PhD, I was warned that it could be a lonely experience. However, I was fortunate to be part of the vibrant postgraduate community at Northumbria. I would like to thank my colleagues, both past and present, for their friendship, guidance and words of wisdom.

Finally, I must thank my parents for always encouraging me to work hard and to pursue my interests. For emotional support through the ups and downs of this project, I wish to give my particular thanks to my husband, Nick.



## **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 21 January 2014.

**I declare that word count of this thesis is 77, 264**

**Name:** Sarah Hellowell

**Signature:**

**Date:**

## **Table of Abbreviations**

BL	British Library
BLPES	British Library of Political and Economic Science
CTW	Committee of Traffic of Women and Children
DCWIO	Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organisations
ERI	Equal Rights International
FOR	Fellowship of Reconciliation
IAWSEC	International Alliance of Women's Societies for Equal Citizenship
ICRR	International Committee for Russian Relief
ICW	International Council of Women
ICWPP	International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace
IFLNS	International Federation of League of Nations Societies
IIL	Irishwomen's International League
ILO	International Labour Organisation
IWCG	International Women's Co-operative Guild
IWSA	International Woman Suffrage Alliance
LCIWO	Liaison Committee of International Women's Organisations
LIFPL	Ligue Internationale des Femmes pour la Paix et le Liberté
LNS	League of Nations Society
LNU	League of Nations Union
NCF	No-Conscription Fellowship
NCW	National Council of Women
NUSEC	National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship
NUWSS	National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies
ODC	Open Door Council

PDCWIO	Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organisations
PMC	Permanent Mandates Commission
PPU	Peace Pledge Union
SCPC	Swarthmore College Peace Collection
SPG	Six Point Group
TWL@LSE	The Women's Library, London School of Economics
UDC	Union of Democratic Control
WCC	Women's Consultative Committee (1936)
WCCN	Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality
WCG	Women's Co-operative Guild
WIL	Women's International League
WILPF	Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
WPC	Women's Peace Crusade
WPP	Women's Peace Party
WSPU	Women's Social and Political Union



## Introduction

In October 1915, members of the recently founded Women's International League (WIL) made the following announcement at the association's formative conference held in London.

Upon women as non-combatants lies a special responsibility at the present time for giving expression to the revolt of the modern mind of humanity against war. Therefore, we women of the Women's International League, assembled in conference, do band ourselves together to unite with women of all nations to demand that international co-operation between the peoples, secured by goodwill and organization, shall supersede the outworn system of warfare.

We ask that women may be given equal rights of citizenship in order that their voice may be heard in all national and international councils.<sup>1</sup>

As this statement illustrates, WIL combined campaigns for women's suffrage and peace, asserting that women had a unique contribution to make to international relations. Founded by British feminists in response to the Great War, WIL campaigned for reconciliation, disarmament, internationalism and equal rights throughout the war years and interwar period. Notably, WIL believed that women had a unique role to play in the negotiation of peace and international law. This thesis examines the first twenty years of WIL's activism – from the 1915 International Congress of Women until 1935, when the political consensus within the organisation came under threat and the hope that internationalism would secure peace was fading.

As the British section of what came to be known as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), WIL was part of a women's organisation that was international in scope and transnational in its working patterns. Founded as the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP) following the

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<sup>1</sup> Women's International League, *Manifesto Issued by the Conference held on September 20<sup>th</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup> 1915* (October 1915). Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Papers, 1915–1978, Series I: Part B, Reel 9.



International Congress of Women, held at The Hague from 28 April to 1 May 1915, the association changed its name to WILPF at its second congress in 1919.<sup>2</sup>

WILPF had a broad programme based around its dual goals of securing peace and rights for women, which encompassed women's suffrage, equal nationality rights for married women, permanent peace, the creation of a 'Society of Nations', international law, arbitration and humanitarian relief. Worldwide, WILPF had approximately 50,000 members in forty countries during the interwar years with WIL being one of its most active national sections in terms of membership and campaigns.<sup>3</sup> By 1920, the British WIL had 4,200 members in forty branches, which had risen to 6,000 in 1935.<sup>4</sup>

This thesis is the first in-depth study of WIL. As such, it sheds light on the transformation of British women's political activism after the extension of the franchise in 1918. In particular, it reveals how women raised their voices on the issues of war, peace, international relations and equal rights. Traditional accounts of the British suffrage movement assumed that the campaign splintered upon the outbreak of war and never regained the strength of the mass movement for votes.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, this thesis shows that feminists, whose activism developed during the suffrage campaign, built on their experiences, entered the sphere of international politics and cultivated alliances with a range of political activists. The representation of peace as a women's issue was a central feature of WIL. The association's pacifism stemmed from a radical feminist critique of

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<sup>2</sup> I will refer to the organisation as WILPF throughout the thesis for consistency, although it did not adopt this name until 1919. I will also use WIL to distinguish the British section from the international WILPF as its members did at the time.

<sup>3</sup> Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims, *Pioneers for Peace: Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915–1965* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980), p. 390.

<sup>4</sup> WILPF, *Pax et Libertas* (February 1920), p. 3; WIL, *Nineteenth Yearly Report, March 1934–January 1935* (London: WIL, 1935). WILPF, III: British Section, Reel 70.

<sup>5</sup> Susan Kingsley Kent, 'The Politics of Sexual Difference: World War I and the Demise of British Feminism', *The Journal of British Studies*, 27:3 (1988), pp. 232–253; Olive Banks, *The Politics of British Feminism, 1918–1970* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1993); Les Garner, *Stepping Stones to Women's Liberty: Feminist Ideas in the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1900–1918* (New Jersey: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1984); Brian Harrison, *Prudent Revolutionaries: Portraits of British Feminists Between the Wars* (Gloucestershire: Clarendon Press, 1987).

militarism alongside more essentialist assertions about female nature, particularly women's roles as mothers. Notwithstanding Jill Liddington's seminal text on the history of the women's peace movement in Britain, historians have largely failed to integrate the concept of feminist pacifism into accounts of both the interwar women's and peace movements.<sup>6</sup> This thesis examines WIL's feminist pacifism by analysing the association's campaigns for peace, disarmament and international law, alongside its goals for women's rights. The study demonstrates that WIL considered its campaign for peace to be an integral aspect of its feminist activism and thus situates WIL firmly in the British women's movement.

Much work on women's political activism tends to be nationally focused, only rarely exploring the local and international settings of women's politics.<sup>7</sup> However, recent work on the international women's movement by Leila Rupp, Karen Offen and Marie Sandell has demonstrated the vibrancy of women's activism at the international level, highlighting a variety of women's organisations, such as the International Council of Women, the International Women's Suffrage Alliance and the Pan-Pacific Women's Association.<sup>8</sup> Yet, a focus on the international level means that these studies have less to say about how national affiliates pursued, modified or even challenged the work of international organisations. An investigation of the latter process is, however, important because, as Glenda Sluga acknowledges, 'the national and international remained entwined

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<sup>6</sup> Jill Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common: Feminism and Anti-Militarism in Britain since 1820* (London: Virago, 1989). Martin Pugh is dismissive of WIL's impact on the British women's movement, Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914*, 3rd ed. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), p. 85; similarly, Martin Ceadel argues that 'a fully articulated feminist pacifism was not to find expression within the British peace movement until after the women's liberation movement developed in the 1970s', Martin Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists: The British Peace Movement and International Relations, 1854–1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 209.

<sup>7</sup> Karen Hunt, 'Rethinking Activism: Lessons from the History of Women's Politics', *Parliamentary Affairs*, 62:2 (2009), p. 220.

<sup>8</sup> Leila Rupp, *Worlds of Women: The Making of the International Women's Movement* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997); Karen Offen, *European Feminisms 1700–1950* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000); Marie Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism: Identity and Sisterhood between the World Wars* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2015).

as ways of thinking about the self and society'.<sup>9</sup> This study will thus make a distinct contribution to the study of women's internationalism, examining the relationship between WIL and its international partner, WILPF. In doing so, it reveals some of the tensions and difficulties inherent in transnational campaigning. Furthermore, the thesis examines WIL's interactions within a broader field of activism, both nationally and internationally. Founded to lobby for women's rights and peace, WIL's activism touched on a number of different areas. Through overlapping membership and shared interests, WIL co-operated frequently with other women's and peace organisations, as well humanitarian societies, liberal internationalists and women in labour and socialist organisations. This thesis, therefore, highlights the interconnectedness and overlap between social movements to indicate the significance of WIL to the history of interwar activism.

### **Situating WIL's feminism, pacifism and internationalism**

Gertrude Bussey and Margaret Tims' *Pioneers for Peace* is a chronological organisational history of WILPF's first fifty years. The book offers a sound narrative of WILPF's main campaigns during the period but fails to analyse the wider context of activism that influenced the association.<sup>10</sup> Catherine Foster produced a quasi-sequel to Bussey and Tims' work, which outlines WILPF's history after 1965 but tends to focus primarily on the American members and branches of the association.<sup>11</sup> The US section of WILPF and its place in the wider American peace movement has attracted more scholarly attention than any other national section of WILPF.<sup>12</sup> Perhaps this concentration of literature is due to the

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<sup>9</sup> Glenda Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013), p. 150. Likewise, Annika Wilmers suggests that 'internationalism did not preclude nationalism, but was in fact the extension of it' for those at The Hague congress, Annika Wilmers, 'Pacifism, Nationalism and Internationalism in the French and German Women's Movement during the First World War', *Minerva Journal of Women and War*, 1:1 (2007), p. 82.

<sup>10</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*.

<sup>11</sup> Catherine Foster, *Women For All Seasons: The Story of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Carrie Foster, *The Women and the Warriors: The U.S. Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915–1946* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995); Harriet Hyman Alonso,

prominence of American women within the foundation of the organisation. WILPF's first two international Presidents – Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch – were American and the US section provided most of the funds for WILPF's international work.<sup>13</sup> Although Jo Vellacott highlights the wartime activism of pacifist members of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) who formed WIL, she focuses primarily on the war years and overlooks the impact of internationalism on WIL's domestic campaigns.<sup>14</sup> This analysis will consider the internationalism of WIL during the interwar years, whilst revealing the interrelations and co-operation between WIL and other voluntary associations.

WIL's first Chair, Helena Swanwick wrote in 1920 that 'there are, of course, a good many organisations of more and less advanced feminists, but none which makes just the connection that we do between feminism and the abolition of war'.<sup>15</sup> This statement illustrates how WIL leaders envisaged the organisation's position at the intersection of the women's and peace movements. Overall, historians have overlooked its unique function as a feminist peace organisation and failed to acknowledge the presence of a vocal women's peace movement before the 1960s.<sup>16</sup> Alternatively, others have demonstrated the origins of

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*Peace as a Woman's Issue: A History of the U.S. Movement for World Peace and Women's Rights* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1993).

<sup>13</sup> Linda K. Schott, *Reconstructing Women's Thoughts: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Before World War II* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997); David S. Patterson, *The Search for Negotiated Peace: Women's Activism and Citizen Diplomacy in World War I* (New York: Routledge, 2008); Kathleen Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers and Scurrilous Citizens: Women and Subversion During World War I* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999); Joyce Blackwell, *No Peace Without Freedom: Race and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1915–1975* (Carbondale: South Illinois University Press, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Jo Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory: The Early Work of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom', *Women's History Review*, 2:1 (1993), pp. 23–56.

<sup>15</sup> Helena Swanwick, 'A Regiment of Women', *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1920), p. 1.

<sup>16</sup> Martin Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain, 1914–1999* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p. 104; Richard Evans, *Comrades and Sisters: Feminism, Socialism and Pacifism in Europe, 1870–1945* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1987), p. 151. Penny Summerfield suggests that Pugh overlooks the presences of a women's peace movement in the early twentieth century, Penny Summerfield, 'Women and War in the Twentieth Century', in June Purvis ed., *Women's History: Britain, 1850–1945* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 317.

feminist-pacifist ideas in the peace movements of the nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> Inspired by the demonstrations at Greenham Common in 1981, Jill Liddington explored the history of women's peace activism concluding that the 1915 women's congress – the formative meeting in the history of both WILPF and WIL – was the start of a formalised women's peace movement in Britain.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, my thesis contributes to a growing field of literature that aims to uncover women's wartime experiences beyond traditional accounts to include women's internationalism and anti-militarism after 1914.<sup>19</sup> At the same time, this study shows the distinct nature of WIL as a feminist peace association – which is important, as its presence in existing accounts of the British peace movement has remained limited.<sup>20</sup> Overall, then, this thesis provides fresh insights on the nature of both the women's and peace movements by drawing attention to the ways in which they intersected.

The 1915 congress was certainly a remarkable demonstration of transnational solidarity. As a result, the story of the formation of WILPF has predominantly been told from an international perspective.<sup>21</sup> This study will shed light on the efforts of British women to attend the congress and the establishment of WIL in 1915 to carry out the transnational aims of WILPF at the national and local level, in co-operation with

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<sup>17</sup> Heloise Brown, 'The Truest Form of Patriotism', *Pacifist Feminism in Britain, 1870–1902* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003), p. 1; Eliza Riedi, 'The Women pro-Boers: Gender, Peace and the Critique of Empire in the South African War', *Historical Research*, 86:231 (2013), pp. 92–115.

<sup>18</sup> Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common*, p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army: War and the Gentle Sex, 1907–1948* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006); Angela K. Smith, *Suffrage Discourse in Britain During the First World War* (Aldgate: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2005); Christa Hammerle, Oswald Uberegger and Birgitta Bader-Zaar, *Gender and the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); see also Maggie Andrews, Alison Fell, Lucy Noakes and June Purvis, 'Representing, Remembering and Rewriting Women's Histories of the First World War', *Women's History Review* (2017).

<sup>20</sup> Martin Ceadel recognises WIL as one of five new significant peace associations formed following the outbreak of war in 1914, alongside the Union of Democratic Control (UDC), the League of Nations Society (LNS), the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF): Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 198. See also, Keith Robbins, *The Abolition of War: The 'Peace Movement' in Britain, 1914–1919* (Leighton Buzzard: University of Wales Press, 1976), p. 99; Cecelia Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 33.

<sup>21</sup> Leila B. Costin, 'Feminism, Pacifism, Internationalism and the 1915 International Congress of Women', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 5:3 (1982), pp. 301–15; Rebecca Sherrick, 'Toward Universal Sisterhood', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 5:6 (1982), pp. 655–61.

colleagues across national borders. A ‘significant minority’ of pacifist members of the National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) resigned from their posts in the Union and went on to found WIL during the Great War.<sup>22</sup> Divides within the suffrage movement has led some historians to assume that the campaign declined during the interwar period. Nonetheless, claims that the women’s movement was ‘splintered and constrained in its ability to advocate equality for women’ have largely been debunked.<sup>23</sup> Recent work – including studies by Caitríona Beaumont, Maggie Andrews, Pat Thane and Helen McCarthy – has revealed a wealth of women’s activism during the interwar years in women’s organisations,<sup>24</sup> parliamentary politics,<sup>25</sup> and a range of other voluntary associations.<sup>26</sup> This study will contribute to the developing field to situate WIL’s activism in the wider women’s movement and demonstrate the vitality of women’s activism during the so-called ‘doldrums’ of feminism.<sup>27</sup> An analysis of WIL’s role in the women’s movement, therefore, can contribute to the expanding literature that challenges the traditional assumption that the women’s movement declined after 1918.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Alison S. Fell and Ingrid Sharp, *The Women’s Movement in Wartime, International Perspectives, 1914–19* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 12; Jo Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote: The Erosion of Democratic Suffragism in Britain During the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>23</sup> Susan Kingsley Kent, *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 115; see also, Hilda Kean, ‘Searching for the Past in Present Defeat: The Construction of Historical and Political Identity in British Feminism in the 1920s and 1930s’, *Women’s History Review*, 3:1 (1994), p. 64.

<sup>24</sup> Caitríona Beaumont, ‘Citizens Not Feminists: The Boundary Negotiated between Citizenship and Feminism by Mainstream Women’s Organisations in England, 1928–39’, *Women’s History Review*, 9:2, (2000), pp. 411–429; Maggie Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: The Women’s Institute Movement 1915–1960* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Gisela Bock and Pat Thane, *Maternity and Gender Policies: Women and the Rise of the European Welfare States, 1880s–1950s* (London: Routledge, 1991); Pat Thane, ‘What Difference Did the Vote Make?’, in Amanda Vickery ed., *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

<sup>26</sup> Helen McCarthy, ‘Service Clubs, Citizenship and Equality: Gender Relations and Middle-Class Associations in Britain between the Wars’, *Historical Research*, 81:213 (2008), pp. 531–52.

<sup>27</sup> Olive Banks, *Becoming a Feminist: The Social Origins of ‘First Wave’ Feminism* (Atlanta: University of Georgia Press, 1987), p. 71.

<sup>28</sup> Adrian Bingham, ‘“An Era of Domesticity”? Histories of Women and Gender in Interwar Britain’, *Cultural and Social History*, 1:2 (2004), pp. 225–33.

As noted by Karen Offen, there was a ‘surge of activism’ at the international level of the women’s movement during the interwar years.<sup>29</sup> Transnational co-operation by women was by no means a new feature of the interwar period, however: suffragists had built links with one another across national boundaries before 1914.<sup>30</sup> Women’s organisations, like WILPF, built on existing transnational connections to lobby the newly formed League of Nations.<sup>31</sup> WILPF’s transnational features were more pronounced than those of its forerunners: its national sections emerged following the 1915 congress to carry out the work of the international women’s peace organisation. Moreover, members of its International Executive Committee were elected as individuals rather than national representatives. Yet, as Laura Beers points out, Rupp’s *Worlds of Women* ‘obscures the extent to which WILPF differed from the older organisations in both its principles and its operating practice’.<sup>32</sup> In these respects, WILPF contrasted with earlier international women’s organisations, which were largely conceived as confederations comprised of national branches. This is not to say that British WIL members were detached from their national context. After all, WIL participated in the national activities of the British women’s movement. Many of its members had been prominent in the pre-war suffrage campaign and WIL continued to work alongside a range of women’s political and voluntary associations during the interwar years. Yet, WIL cast itself as part of a transnational women’s organisation, claiming that its ‘international character ... has

<sup>29</sup> Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 343.

<sup>30</sup> Sandra Stanley Holton, “‘To Educate Women into Rebellion’: Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the Creation of a Transatlantic Network of Radical Suffragists”, *The American Historical Review*, 99:4 (1994), pp. 1112–36; Patricia Ward D’Itri, *Cross-Currents in the International Women’s Movement, 1848–1948* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999); Ellen Carol DuBois, ‘Woman Suffrage Around the World: Three Phases of Suffragist Internationalism’, in Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan eds., *Suffrage and Beyond: International Feminist Perspectives* (New York: New York University Press, 1994).

<sup>31</sup> Carol Miller, “‘Geneva—the Key to Equality’: Inter-War Feminists and the League of Nations”, *Women’s History Review*, 3:2 (1994), pp. 219–45; Glenda Sluga, ‘Female and National Self-Determination: A Gender Re-reading of “The Apogee of Nationalism”’, *Nations and Nationalism*, 6:4 (2000), pp. 495–521; Susan Pedersen, ‘Metaphors of the Schoolroom: Women Working the Mandates System of the League of Nations’, *History Workshop Journal*, 66 (2008), pp. 188–207.

<sup>32</sup> Laura Beers, ‘Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism between the Wars’, in Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James eds., *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 206.

distinguished it from the first'.<sup>33</sup> Through the prism of WIL, this thesis investigates WILPF's internationalism. An analysis of the relationship between WIL and WILPF reveals the difficulties of organising transnationally and the compromises WILPF made to preserve unity. This study, therefore, seeks to contribute to our understanding of the ways in which British women engaged in transnational co-operation and with the League of Nations during the interwar years.<sup>34</sup>

The development of the literature on international women's movements goes hand in hand with the ever-expanding field of transnational history and international institutions, particularly the League of Nations.<sup>35</sup> As Patricia Clavin has noted, transnationalism allows historians to challenge 'nationally determined timescales'.<sup>36</sup> Thus, the 'transnational turn' has transformed the history of feminism, which also looks beyond traditional periodisation.<sup>37</sup> This study of WIL will focus on multilateral connections, travel, exchanges and interactions between activists, and the transfer of information and campaigns.<sup>38</sup> A transnational approach that considers how international intersections influenced and reinforced the British women's movement will be instructive for this study of WIL.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1920), p. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Julie V. Gottlieb, "'The Women's Movement Took the Wrong Turning': British Feminists, Pacifism and the Politics of Appeasement", *Women's History Review*, 23.3 (2014), p. 445; Julie V. Gottlieb, *'Guilty Women': Foreign Policy and Appeasement in Inter-War Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

<sup>35</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, 'The Imagined Communities of Women's History: Current Debates and Emerging Themes, a Rhizomatic Approach', *Women's History Review*, 22:4 (2013), p. 527; see Akira Iriye, *Global and Transnational History, The Past, Present and Future* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).

<sup>36</sup> Patricia Clavin, 'Defining Transnationalism', *Contemporary European History*, 14: 4 (2005), p. 429.

<sup>37</sup> Marilyn Lake, 'Nationalist Historiography, Feminist Scholarship, and the Promise and Problems of New Transnational Histories: The Australian Case', *Journal of Women's History*, 19:1 (2007), p. 183. See also, Pierre-Yves Saunier, *Transnational History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 25; Ann Taylor Allen, Anne Cova and June Purvis, 'International Feminisms', *Women's History Review*, 19:4 (2010), pp. 493–501.

<sup>38</sup> Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönplflug eds., *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Networks, Biographies, Gender Orders* (London: Berghahn Books, 2014), p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> For instance, Julie Carlier sheds light on how international connections shaped the Belgian women's movement. Julie Carlier, 'Entangled Feminisms. Rethinking the History of the Belgian Movement for Women's Rights Through Transnational Intersections', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 90:4 (2012), p. 1340. See also, Barbara Bush and June Purvis, 'Connecting Women's Histories: The Local and the Global', *Women's History Review*, 25:4 (2016), pp. 493–98.



## Defining terms

This thesis will examine WIL's campaigns and the discourse surrounding feminism, pacifism and internationalism. It is therefore necessary to outline WIL's understanding and definition of these three terms. WIL's feminism, pacifism and internationalism intertwined and influenced the organisation's formation and its campaigns throughout the interwar years. Moreover, WIL encompassed a broad range of activists, with connections to a variety of social movements, thus the organisation's commitment to its integral principles was broad-based and all encompassing. Nonetheless, at times the concepts of peace, freedom and internationalism were unclear, which led to tensions within the wider organisation during the international economic and political crises of the 1930s.

### *Feminism*

Moving beyond a narrowly defined view of feminism – as synonymous with suffrage – reveals a wealth of activism by and for women. Traditional accounts concluded that feminism declined after 1918, as 'old' and 'new' feminists were unable to work with one another.<sup>40</sup> In contrast, Offen's definition of feminism, which is more comprehensive and dynamic, incorporates cultural and temporal changes within the women's movement. Seeking to 'reclaim the power of difference', she challenges the dichotomy between relational (new) and individualist (old) feminism to create a much broader understanding of the women's movement, which has been developed further through the adoption of gender as a category of analysis.<sup>41</sup> Although the broader category of gender has been criticised by some, it has been deeply influential to the history of feminism and the

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<sup>40</sup> Kean, 'Searching for the Past in Present Defeat', p. 64; Johanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace, 1914–1928* (London: Macmillan, 1989), p. 309.

<sup>41</sup> Karen Offen, 'Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach', *Signs*, 14:1 (1988), pp. 137; Joan Wallach Scott, 'Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis', *The American Historical Review*, 91:5 (1986), pp. 1053–1075; Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

women's movement.<sup>42</sup> Furthermore, a focus on international women's organisations has highlighted the importance of transnational networks and the concept of 'sisterhood' for feminism to create a space for women beyond the existing male power structure.<sup>43</sup> This study demonstrates the importance of networks for WIL, particularly on the international level to assert women's presence in international politics.

WIL's feminism was complex and featured a combination of campaigns for legal and political equality alongside its campaigns that focused on women's differences from men. The issues of war and peace were highly gendered, leading some feminists to dismiss peace projects as perpetuating women's subjection.<sup>44</sup> Yet, rather than equate femininity and pacifism with passivity, WIL's activism was rooted in feminism, and the majority of its founding members were radical suffragists.<sup>45</sup> Although feminist pacifism was a 'maze of conflicting and sometimes contradictory commitments' – which has led some historians to overlook WIL in their accounts of feminism – early members of WIL drew a connection between patriarchy, dominance and war, linking the elimination of violence to the campaign for equality.<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, using the term 'feminist' is difficult, as many activists distanced themselves from negative connotations associated with feminism.<sup>47</sup> In her history of the

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<sup>42</sup> Nancy F. Cott, 'Comment on Karen Offen's "Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach"', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 15:1 (1989), pp. 203–205; Joan Hoff, 'Gender as a Postmodern Category of Paralysis', *Women's History Review*, 17:4 (1994), pp. 443–47.

<sup>43</sup> Leila Rupp, 'Constructing Internationalism: The Case of Transnational Women's Organizations, 1888–1945', *The American Historical Review*, 99:5 (1994), pp. 1583; Vellacott, 'Feminism as If All People Mattered: Working to Remove the Causes of War, 1919–1929', p. 382; Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 8.

<sup>44</sup> Catia Cecelia Confortini, *Intelligent Compassion, Feminist Critical Methodology in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), p. 7; Billie Melman, *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870–1930* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 4.

<sup>45</sup> Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism in Feminist Theory', p. 27.

<sup>46</sup> Berenice A. Carroll, 'Feminism and Pacifism: Historical and Theoretical Connections', in Ruth Roach Pierson ed., *Women and Peace: Theoretical, Historical and Practical Perspectives* (New York: Croom Helm, 1987), pp. 7–18.

<sup>47</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 132.

women's suffrage movement, Helena Swanwick claimed that 'women in the movement often wish that the word humanist had not been appropriated because it would far more properly connote the women's movement than the word feminist', demonstrating that her feminism was closely linked to wider concerns for humanity and democracy.<sup>48</sup> It is clear that WIL's feminism stemmed from broad concerns for social justice. WIL's twin objectives centred on peace and equality; encompassing nationality, politics, equal pay for equal work and the endowment of motherhood. Offen claims that international relations overshadowed the association's feminist aims during the late 1920s and 1930s.<sup>49</sup> In contrast, this thesis demonstrates that for WIL, feminism and pacifism were inherently linked. WIL maintained that women should play a role within the sphere of international relations, particularly during the crises of the 1930s. The association was concerned with raising the status of women throughout the period. In 1932, it re-asserted its principal goals to work for 'establishment of social, political and economic justice for all, without distinction of sex, race, class or creed'.<sup>50</sup>

### ***Pacifism/Pacificism***

Founded in 1915 as a reaction to the devastation of the Great War, WIL's pressing aim was to secure an immediate cessation of hostilities through mediation. Yet, the association's vague conception of 'peace' led to difficulties in the 1930s. Peace is often portrayed as a feminine quality, based on the notion of men and women having different viewpoints on the issue of war.<sup>51</sup> Yet, work by Jessica Meyer and Lucy Noakes demonstrates that the

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<sup>48</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, *The Future of the Women's Movement* (London: G.Bell & Sons, 1913), p. vii.

<sup>49</sup> Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 360.

<sup>50</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Seventh Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Grenoble, May 15 to 19, 1932* (Geneva: WILPF, 1932), p. 52.

<sup>51</sup> Erika Kuhlman, 'The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Reconciliation after the Great War', in Alison Fell and Ingrid Sharp eds., *The Women's Movement in Wartime, International Perspectives, 1914–19* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 227; Judith Hicks Stiehm, *Champions for Peace: Women Winners of the Nobel Peace Prize* (Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2006),

Great War simultaneously challenged and reinforced popular notions of femininity and masculinity.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, WIL's pacifism was based on traditional gender concepts as well as a radical feminism that both supported and challenged these notions. For many founding members of WIL, peace was more than just the absence of war; their campaigns for peace were the logical extension of suffrage activism.<sup>53</sup> Catherine Marshall – who resigned from the Executive Committee of the NUWSS in March 1915 when it failed to support the aims of the Hague congress – saw the campaign for a just settlement of the Great War as 'the natural and almost inevitable development' of the work of the suffrage movement.<sup>54</sup> WIL criticised the concept of militarism, which it believed to be the pinnacle of patriarchal oppression – a direct threat to the progress of the woman's movement.<sup>55</sup> Alternatively, a peaceful society would allow women to thrive and reach their full potential; in addition, enfranchised women could contribute to the establishment of world peace.

Moreover, WIL activists considered women suited to peacemaking due to their experience and status as mothers. WIL used the rhetoric of motherhood, particularly during the war years, to demonstrate that women had a unique understanding of the cost of war, which ought to be heard in the international political sphere. Whilst veering close to an essentialist claim about female nature, WIL also asserted that peace was an active quality, closely linked to a progressive vision of internationalism and women's rights. The Great

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p. xii; Margaret Randolph Higonnet, *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 1.

<sup>52</sup> Jessica Meyer, *Men of War: Masculinity and the First World War in Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 2; Lucy Noakes, 'Playing at Being Soldiers?: British Women and Military Uniform in the First World War' in Jessica Meyer ed., *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008), p. 142.

<sup>53</sup> Josephine Eglin, 'Women Pacifists in Interwar Britain', in Peter Brock and Thomas P. Socknat eds., *Challenge to Mars: Essays on Pacifism from 1918 to 1945* (Toronto: University of Toronto, 1999), p. 157.

<sup>54</sup> Catherine Marshall, Letter to the Executive Committee, 09 March 1915. BLPES, WILPF/4/1. Kathleen Courtney, Alice Clark, Isabella Ford, Katherine Harley, Margaret Ashton, Emily Leaf, Helena Swanwick, Maude Royden and Cary Schuster also tendered their resignation to the NUWSS Executive Committee, March/April 1915.

<sup>55</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, *Women and War* (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1915), p. 7, SCPC, Helena Maria Swanwick, CDG-B Great Britain; A. Maude Royden, *War and the Woman's Movement* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1915), TWL@LSE, 7AMR/2/30. See also, Karen J. Warren and Duane L. Cady, 'Feminism and Peace: Seeing Connections', *Hypatia*, 9:2 (1994), p. 6.

War reinvigorated concerns for non-combatants and the question of child welfare, as the crude demand for ‘cannon fodder’ increased, with obvious implications for women’s patriotic duty.<sup>56</sup> The use of maternal rhetoric during the 1914–1918 war was complex.<sup>57</sup> Patriotic propaganda evoked images of mothers’ national service and imperial visions of women as ‘mothers of the race’.<sup>58</sup> Yet, WIL also used maternal rhetoric alongside its radical opposition to militarism, adopting a language of motherhood in relation to the loss of human life, which this thesis will explore in more detail.

WIL incorporated women from different activist backgrounds who often held different ideas about peace and how it should be achieved. As Martin Ceadel claims, WIL was a ‘pacifist’ society that included a strong pacifist element.<sup>59</sup> Ceadel’s use of A.J.P. Taylor’s term ‘pacifist’ has led to its widespread use in the literature on peace movements to distinguish peace activists and war resisters from absolute pacifists. ‘Pacifists’ were reformers, often focused on building up strong international co-operation to prevent war, who could justify limited conflict in order to secure their higher goals of permanent peace and international law. Whereas, pacifists held to a moral creed that asserted that war is always wrong.<sup>60</sup> Norman Ingram, however, argues that the terms pacifist and pacifist are ‘arguably artificial’ as there was crossover between the two factions during the 1920s.<sup>61</sup> Within WIL and WILPF, there was significant overlap between ‘pacifist’ anti-militarists and reformers, and pacifist women. Nonetheless, the distinction became clearer during the mid-1930s when faced with the threat of war with Nazi Germany. Pacifists were forced

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<sup>56</sup> Anna Davin, ‘Imperialism and Motherhood’, *History Workshop*, 5 (1978), pp. 9–65.

<sup>57</sup> Susan R. Grayzel, *Women’s Identities at War: Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Eileen Yeo, ‘The Creation of “Motherhood” and Women’s Responses in Britain and France, 1750–1914’, *Women’s History Review*, 8:2 (1999), pp. 201–18.

<sup>59</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, Appendix I.

<sup>60</sup> ‘Pacifist’ is a phrase Ceadel borrows from A.J.P. Taylor’s *English History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965). Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 7.

<sup>61</sup> Norman Ingram, *The Politics of Dissent: Pacifism in France, 1919–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 4.

to choose between absolutism, war resistance, internationalism or ‘realize they were not pacifists at all’.<sup>62</sup>

The co-operation between pacificism and pacifism within WIL, particularly at the international level of WILPF, came under threat when faced with rising fascism in the 1930s. At WILPF’s 1934 international congress the association debated the form of its own constitution. The tensions between national sections arose from differing interpretations of its main aims: peace and freedom. Clara Ragaz, the Swiss congress organiser, stated that ‘peace is a method and not a state’. Yet, other WILPF members asserted that ‘State Fascism is our worse enemy’ and favoured co-operation with those who were resisting the spread of fascism.<sup>63</sup> As the debate indicates, WILPF had not clearly defined its emphasis on freedom; the concept loosely connected the organisation’s commitments to peace, women’s rights and democracy. Nonetheless, divides opened up within both the international organisation and the British section over activists’ conception of ‘freedom’. Debates over the appropriate methods to secure peace and freedom revolved around whether the ends justified the means.

### ***Internationalism***

As has been noted, WIL portrayed internationalism as a defining characteristic of its activity. Due to its prominence in the international women’s movement, a number of historians have studied WILPF’s activism.<sup>64</sup> However, as Beers has acknowledged, there is room to explore WILPF’s internationalism further.<sup>65</sup> Rupp has noted that the concept of

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<sup>62</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, p. 123.

<sup>63</sup> WILPF, *Eighth International Congress: Minutes of Proceedings, Zurich* (1934), p. 2. SCPC, WILPF Collection DG043, Part II, Reel 141.2.

<sup>64</sup> For instance, Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*; Foster, *Women For All Seasons*; Rupp, *Worlds of Women*; Schott, *Reconstructing Women’s Thoughts*.

<sup>65</sup> Laura Beers, ‘Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism between the Wars’, in Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James eds., *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 206.

internationalism remained ‘a vaguely defined force’ within the international women’s movement.<sup>66</sup> Although the International Council of Women and the International Woman Suffrage Alliance had addressed transnational issues prior to 1915, WILPF was established in the context of the Great War and the creation of the League of Nations. One of WILPF’s founding aims was support for a ‘Society of Nations’ and it was an advocate of the League throughout the interwar years.<sup>67</sup> A study of WIL, therefore, contributes to our understanding of women’s engagement with the League and interwar internationalism.<sup>68</sup>

WIL’s conception of ‘internationalism’, however, was broad and all encompassing.<sup>69</sup> The association joined a diffuse spectrum of associations committed to transnational aspirations, including socialist, liberal and intellectual internationalists.<sup>70</sup> Members of WIL frequently spoke of a ‘spiritual internationalism’, and asserted the importance of the ‘ties that bind humanity together – not merely in a sentimental way, but with a direct application to the problems that confront the world’.<sup>71</sup> Thus, the association’s

<sup>66</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 108; see also Karen Hunt, “‘The Immense Meaning of It All’: The Challenges of Internationalism for British Socialist Women before the First World War”, *Socialist History*, 17 (2000), p. 24.

<sup>67</sup> Resolutions adopted at the International Congress of Women, The Hague, 28 April to 1 May 1915, p. 8. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>68</sup> Carol Miller, “‘Geneva—the Key to Equality’: Inter-War Feminists and the League of Nations”, *Women’s History Review*, 3:2 (1994), pp. 219–45; Barbara Metzger, ‘Towards an International Human Rights Regime during the Inter-War Years: The League of Nations’ Combat of Traffic in Women and Children’ in Kevin Grant, Philippa Levine and Frank Trentmann eds., *Beyond Sovereignty: Britain, Empire and Transnationalism, c. 1880–1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 54; Susan Pedersen, ‘Metaphors of the Schoolroom: Women Working the Mandates System of the League of Nations’, *History Workshop Journal*, 66 (2008), pp. 188–207; Lara Vapnek, ‘The 1919 International Congress of Working Women: Transnational Debates on the “Woman Worker”’, *Journal of Women’s History*, 26:1 (2014), pp. 160–184; Madeliene Herren, ‘Gender and International Relations through the Lens of the League of Nations (1919–1945)’ in Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James eds., *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Glenda Sluga, ‘Women, Feminisms and Twentieth-Century Internationalisms’ in Glenda Sluga and Patricia Clavin eds., *Internationalisms: A Twentieth-Century History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), p. 64.

<sup>69</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 108.

<sup>70</sup> Daniel Laqua, *The Age of Internationalism and Belgium, 1880–1930: Peace, Progress and Prestige* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp. 3–4; Karen Offen, ‘Understanding International Feminism as “Transnational” – an Anachronism?’ in Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönpflug eds., *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Networks, Biographies, Gender Orders* (London: Berghahn Books, 2014), p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1922), p. 1.

internationalism referred to a utopian notion of a shared humanity, a means of organising effective feminist-pacifist campaigns, and a practical form for post-war governance.

The association's international headquarters were set up in 1920 at Maison Internationale in Geneva to be close to the centre of interwar international politics. WILPF's position in Geneva allowed the association to access the international sphere, which, as Sluga has noted, provided an alternative space for activists to advocate a role for women in the political sphere.<sup>72</sup> WILPF, like other international women's organisations, directed its transnational campaigns towards the League of Nations and lobbied for women to take up positions within the League.<sup>73</sup> That being said, national sections were central to WILPF's structure and for the implementation of its campaigns. For example, sections lobbied governments for the inclusion of women in national delegations to the League. To this end, WIL and other British women's organisations worked alongside one another in the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations.<sup>74</sup> Feminist internationalists considered national and international interests to be complementary. Established during the Great War, WILPF's membership demonstrated an 'intense patriotism ... inspired with that heroism of gentleness which longs for the service of higher ideals without jeopardizing true national interests.'<sup>75</sup> WIL members believed that international co-operation would best serve the national interest.

As members of a transnational association, British WIL activists felt connected to a broader international movement. According to Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, a British delegate to the 1915 congress, the formative meetings 'marked the dawning consciousness

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<sup>72</sup> Sluga, 'Female and National Self-Determination', p. 495.

<sup>73</sup> Miller, 'Geneva—The Key to Equality?'; Pedersen, 'Metaphors of the Schoolroom'; Susan Pedersen, *The Guardians: The League of Nations and the Crisis of Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), p. 62.

<sup>74</sup> Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations, Circular Letter, 20 March 1929. TWL@LSE, 5ERI/1/A.

<sup>75</sup> WIL, *Towards Permanent Peace*, p. 24. WILPF, I:D, reel 16; see also Wilmers, 'Pacifism, Nationalism and Internationalism', p. 82.



in women of their international solidarity'.<sup>76</sup> Yet, within the association, the debate over whether internationalism should transcend national borders or incorporate them remained unresolved. WILPF was formed around national sections, making it difficult for women to join the international organisation in countries without an existing branch. Moreover, membership of the British WIL was restricted to British 'subjects'; thus women of other nationalities living in Britain were unable to become a member of WIL. WILPF's internationalism did not subsume national identities. Dutch feminist Aletta Jacobs opened the proceedings at The Hague, stating that 'we women of so many different nationalities, who, in order to express our feelings, have to use different languages, and who each one of us has her own national characteristics, have come here animated by the same spirit, the same hopes, the same desire'.<sup>77</sup> Emphasising the national make-up of its delegates helped to highlight the international composition of the organisation.<sup>78</sup>

In practical terms, the organisation managed to maintain its internationalism through travel, correspondence, shared experiences, networks and regular international congresses.<sup>79</sup> Yet, as Sandell shows, the 'international sisterhood' of women's organisations, including WILPF, was based on Western constructs and travel was often only available to members with independent means.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, the relationship between internationalism, feminism and imperialism was complex.<sup>81</sup> Although WILPF was

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<sup>76</sup> Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, 'The Bond of Faith', *Towards Permanent Peace: A Record of the Women's International Congress* (September 1915), p. 17.

<sup>77</sup> Aletta Jacobs, 'Address of Welcome', *Bericht-Rapport-Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II, Reel 141.1.

<sup>78</sup> Mineke Bosch has written on the International Women's Suffrage Alliance's use of national folklore and dress to emphasise its internationalism: Mineke Bosch, 'Between Entertainment and Nationalist Politics: The Uses of Folklore in the Spectacle of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 32:1 (2009), pp. 4–12. See also, Rupp, 'Constructing Internationalism'.

<sup>79</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 135; Marie Sandell, "'A Real Meeting of the Women of the East and the West'", *Women and Internationalism in the Interwar Period* in Daniel Laqua ed., *Internationalism Reconfigured, Transnational Ideas and Movements Between the World Wars* (New York: I.B Tauris, 2011), p. 174.

<sup>80</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 9.

<sup>81</sup> Antoinette Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and "Global Sisterhood" 1900–1915', *Journal of Women's History*, 3:2 (1991), pp. 46–81; Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History*,

critical of colonialism – perhaps more radical in this respect than other international women’s organisations – at times, the association reproduced imperial hierarchies.<sup>82</sup> The nation remained an important feature of interwar internationalism.<sup>83</sup>

Internationalism also provided opportunities for women’s organisations, particularly at the League of Nations. Women’s organisations contributed to the League’s work on social and political transnational issues, including the discussions over the administration of Mandates, the traffic of women and children, and refugees.<sup>84</sup> Ultimately, WIL saw peace and women’s rights as transnational issues that traversed national borders and as a national section of WILPF, lobbied the League on these issues.<sup>85</sup> Although our modern use of its members would not have recognised the term ‘transnational’, Offen argues that it is appropriate to describe international women’s organisations as such. WIL operated above the national level through transnational networks and did not understand ‘international’ to refer to inter-governmental relations.<sup>86</sup> Nonetheless, much of the history of international women’s organisations has focused on the international level of these associations, rather than the interaction between national sections. This study will consider the complex character of internationalism within the British national section. Julie Carlier’s ‘entangled history’ approach to Belgian feminism which highlights ‘the dialectic between the national and the transnational level and the necessity of the inclusion of a transnational perspective

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*British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865–1915* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

<sup>82</sup> Beers, ‘Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism’, p. 212.

<sup>83</sup> Patricia Clavin has identified a transnational paradox, as transnational networks need the co-operation of nations to have impact: Patricia Clavin, ‘Conceptualising Internationalism Between the World Wars’ in Laqua ed., *Internationalism Reconfigured*, p. 5.

<sup>84</sup> Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s*, p. 53; Pedersen, ‘Metaphors of the Schoolroom’, p. 192; Pedersen, *The Guardians*, p. 62.

<sup>85</sup> Beers, ‘Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism’, p. 209

<sup>86</sup> Karen Offen, ‘Understanding International Feminism as “Transnational” – an Anachronism?’, in Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönplüg eds., *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Networks, Biographies, Gender Orders* (London: Berghahn Books, 2014), p. 27.

in the history of national women's movements' will be instructive for this study.<sup>87</sup>

Similarly, in her work on the transnational activism of socialist and suffragist Dora Montefiore, Karen Hunt argues that internationalism incorporated the national identities of activists, and could be used to serve national ends.<sup>88</sup> This thesis, therefore, offers a distinct perspective on both the international women's movement and the British women's movement during the Great War and interwar years by considering the interaction between the two.

### **Sources and methodology**

The archival records of WILPF are extensive – including agendas, annual reports, congress minutes, financial accounts, publications and correspondence. Similarly, the British section's records are wide-ranging, enabling this thesis to provide the first in-depth analysis of WIL. The association – along with many other women's organisations – actively preserved its own records, demonstrating a historical consciousness directly linked to its political activism. In the mid-1930s the US section of WILPF began to collect the papers and documents of its leading members and branches. Storing them at Swarthmore College, near Philadelphia, WILPF's collection evolved into the vast archive that is currently held at Swarthmore, encompassing the records of peace movements in the US and worldwide from 1815 to the present day. Ellen Starr Brinton – a member of the Philadelphia branch of WILPF – became the collection's first curator (1935–1951). Wendy Chmielewski – the current curator at Swarthmore – links the creation of the archives by

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<sup>87</sup> Julie Carlier, 'Forgotten Transnational Connections and National Contexts: An "Entangled History" of the Political Transfers that shaped Belgian Feminism, 1890–1914', *Women's History Review*, 19:4 (2010), p. 517.

<sup>88</sup> Karen Hunt, 'Transnationalism in Practice: The Effect of Dora Montefiore's International Travel on Women's Politics in Britain before World War I', in Pernilla Jonsson, Silke Neunsinger, and Joan Sangster eds., *Crossing Boundaries: Womens Organizing in Europe and the Americas, 1880s–1940s* (Uppsala: Uppsala Universitet, 2007), p. 74.

WILPF to the organisation's political activism.<sup>89</sup> The British branch encouraged its members to add to the growing collection by sending correspondence and papers to Swarthmore, particularly those in relation to its International President, Jane Addams, or its other leading members. In 1935, WIL's *Monthly News Sheet* stated that 'we firmly believe that in the future the work of the W.I.L. will become better recognised and even though discouraged at times we are convinced our work is influencing the world toward our ideals and that our records should be carefully preserved'.<sup>90</sup>

Similarly, Rosa Manus, who had been active in the organisation of the 1915 international women's congress, created the International Archives for the Women's Movement in Amsterdam in 1935. In comparison, in 1926, the Women's Library – now housed at the London School of Economics – was founded as the Library of the London Society for Women's Service to preserve the history of the women's suffrage movement. As Jill Liddington notes, the collections are not only a way of preserving feminist campaigns, but also the library itself is a 'key site of memory' – suggesting that there is a close link between archives, memory, history and activism.<sup>91</sup> Whilst the historical consciousness of WIL activists has provided researchers with a wealth of resources, it can be problematic as the organisation and key individuals had 'extensive power over their own history both at the time and also subsequently'.<sup>92</sup>

Sources written by WIL members have also been instructive. The association published pamphlets as part of its educational priorities, particularly regarding international relations and the League of Nations. Similarly, a number of activists penned

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<sup>89</sup> Wendy Chmielewski, 'Resources for Researching Opposition to WWI', Paper presented at the 'Resistance to War' Conference, Leeds, UK, 18–20 March 2016; see also Swarthmore College Peace Collection's brief history of the archive, accessed 28 October 2016, <https://www.swarthmore.edu/library/peace/>.

<sup>90</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1935), p. 5.

<sup>91</sup> Jill Liddington, 'Fawcett Saga: Remembering the Women's Library across Four Decades', *History Workshop Journal*, 76:1 (2013), p. 12.

<sup>92</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 16.

autobiographies and memoirs, which are used throughout this study. Much like the construction of archives to document the history of the women's movement, the writing of autobiographies by those involved in the suffrage movement was an ongoing political act.<sup>93</sup> Whilst autobiographical sources can be extremely useful for historical research, particularly the project of recovering women's voices and activism, these sources must be treated with care. The subjectivity intrinsic to this genre of writing allows the author to construct an image of the 'self'. This is a fluid concept and can change over time and according to historical and social circumstances. Thus, autobiographical accounts must be placed in their social and political contexts.<sup>94</sup> The narrative form of autobiographies also allows the author to select what to include or exclude, creating a 'highly complex truth'.<sup>95</sup> For example, Margaret Bondfield's memoir says little about her involvement with WIL, as it primarily focuses on her activism in the labour movement and work as a Labour politician. As she became the first woman to serve in the Cabinet, Bondfield's selectivity towards this aspect of her career is somewhat understandable.<sup>96</sup> A reading of her autobiography alongside WIL reports and *Monthly News Sheet*, however, reveals that she was active in the association during its formative years.

Furthermore, this type of account is fundamentally tied to the complexities of context. Emmeline Pethick Lawrence's autobiography, *My Part in a Changing World* focuses on the changes in women's position throughout her lifetime, in particular the extension of the franchise to all women over the age of twenty-one. Pethick Lawrence was involved with WIL from the start, having been one of the British delegates to the 1915 congress, writing that 'from this time forward, the main purpose of my life was to spread

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<sup>93</sup> Kean, 'Searching for the Past in Present Defeat', p. 61.

<sup>94</sup> Siân Lliwen Roberts, 'Place, Life Histories and the Politics of Relief: Episodes in the Life of Francesca Wilson, Humanitarian Educator Activist' (PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham, 2010), p. 18.

<sup>95</sup> Liz Stanley, *Auto/biographical I: The Theory and Practice of Feminist Auto/biography* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), p. 242.

<sup>96</sup> Margaret Bondfield, *A Life's Work* (London: Hutchinson, 1948).

as far as possible, the conviction that peace and negotiation alone could promote a stable condition in Europe'.<sup>97</sup> In comparison, Helena Swanwick's autobiography, *I Have Been Young* was published in the context of the Abyssinian crisis, which brought up the debate on sanctions and collective security. Swanwick, opposing sanctions, wrote 'I meditate on the strange antics of politicians and marvel at their "peace-making"; not much distinguishable from war-making, as it seems to me'.<sup>98</sup> Swanwick and Pethick Lawrence wrote their memoirs before the outbreak of the Second World War, perhaps revealing the optimism of pacifism before 1939, free from the reflection that the post-war period would bring.<sup>99</sup> Clearly, autobiographies depend on a changing and contested set of both personal and collective memory.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, the use of autobiographical sources could overemphasise the roles of core members within WIL at the expense of those who did not write their own memoirs. Indeed, Hilda Kean notes that 'the narratives depict individual and often eccentric lives'.<sup>101</sup> Rupp acknowledges that her work tends to privilege those at the centre of the international women's movement.<sup>102</sup> Although this thesis does highlight a number of key activists within WIL, it also reveals a number of its more grass-roots campaigns. Yet, a focus on key members of WIL enables this thesis to reveal the overlap between the association and a range of other social movements.

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<sup>97</sup> Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1938), p. 314.

<sup>98</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, *I Have Been Young* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1935), p. 500.

<sup>99</sup> Helena Swanwick died in November 1939 from an overdose. Her obituary in the press reported that 'her heart was broken by the complete failure of her day and night campaign since 1914 to avert a new war'. See, 'Tragic Death of a Fighter for Peace', *Manchester City News*, 25 November 1939. SCPC, Helena Maria Swanwick Collected Papers, CDG-B Great Britain, Box 1. In comparison, Vera Brittain's memoirs incorporate her evolving pacifism from the First World War onwards: Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London: Penguin Books, 1933); Vera Brittain, *Testament of Friendship: The Story of Winifred Holtby* (London: Macmillan, 1941); Vera Brittain, *Testament of Experience: An Autobiographical Story of the Years 1925-1950* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1957).

<sup>100</sup> Tess Cosslett, Celia Lury and Penny Summerfield, *Feminism and Autobiography: Texts, Theories and Methods* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 4.

<sup>101</sup> Kean, 'Searching for the Past in Present Defeat', p. 65.

<sup>102</sup> Leila Rupp acknowledges that her work privileges women at the centre of the movement, Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 5.

To overcome these methodological sensitivities, I have consulted a diverse range of sources. WIL records do constitute the bulk of the research for this project, as a result this thesis analyses the voices of WIL members themselves. Nevertheless, the extensive archives at Swarthmore and the Women's Library have also been informative.<sup>103</sup> By drawing on the papers of other associations – including the International Women's Suffrage Alliance, the International Council of Women, the Women's Co-operative Guild, the Union of Democratic Control, as well as the personal papers of a number of activists – this study firmly places WIL as a key member of the British and international movements for both peace and women's rights. In addition, where possible, a range of newspapers and correspondence has been used alongside official reports and organisational records to consider the depth and breadth of WIL's activism between 1915 and 1935.

### **Scope of the project**

This study will focus on WIL to examine the British national section and its relationship with the international association based at Geneva. Although this account does primarily centre on England and WIL's London headquarters, attempts have been made to highlight different regional and local branches of WIL. Where possible, Scottish and Welsh activists are represented in the thesis. For example, the Glasgow WIL branch initiated the Women's Peace Crusade in 1916 and the Welsh women's peace movement successfully mobilised participants during the Peacemakers' Pilgrimage and Disarmament campaigns in the 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>104</sup> Apart from the Manchester branch records; there is a paucity of archival

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<sup>103</sup> Records from the Swarthmore College Peace Collection include the Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organizations, Helena M. Swanwick's papers, the British-American Women's Crusade, the Women's Co-operative Guild. At the Women's Library the following collections have been instrumental: the collection of pamphlets (7AMP), the Nationality of Married Women, Millicent Garrett Fawcett's papers, the International Council of Women, Margery Corbett Ashby papers, Kathleen D'Olier Courtney papers, Agnes Maude Royden papers, WILPF collection (in the LSE collection), Equal Rights International, Mary Sheepshanks papers.

<sup>104</sup> S.A. Williams, "'Law, Not War-Hedd Nid Cledd': Women and the Peace Movement I North Wales, 1926–1945", *The Welsh History Review*, 18:1 (1996), 63–91; Esther Breitenbach and Valerie Wright, 'Women as

sources on local branch activity. Where appropriate, branch reports in WIL's *Monthly News Sheet* are used to demonstrate examples of local WIL activity.<sup>105</sup>

The political situation in Ireland became a primary focus for WIL and attempts were made to establish connections between WIL and the Irishwomen's International League, which gained independent representation within WILPF in 1916, despite Ireland still being part of Great Britain until 1921. Significantly, WILPF's fifth international congress was held in Dublin in July 1926, the first international gathering to be held in the Irish Free State since its recognition by Britain.<sup>106</sup> The Irishwomen's International League was beset with difficulties, however, as its members struggled to reconcile their commitments to peace and freedom, particularly from British rule. Irish nationalists did not find 'sufficient recognition of their nationalism' within the section.<sup>107</sup> Although an Irish section is listed in WIL's Yearly Report of 1934–5, Rosemary Cullen Owens claims that the Irishwomen's International League disintegrated four years earlier, re-emerging in 1991.<sup>108</sup> The complex relationship between nationalism, internationalism and pacifism for Irish feminists will be explored in this thesis, in particular reference to WIL's response to imperialism and the administration of the British Empire's dominions.

### *Time frame*

This account opens with the 1915 congress, which led to the formation of WILPF and WIL. This study will consider the association's foundation and its original aims. In addition, by

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Active Citizens: Glasgow and Edinburgh c.1918–1939', *Women's History Review*, 23:3 (2014), pp. 401–20.

<sup>105</sup> The Manchester WIL Branch Minute Books, 1915–1967. BLPES, WILPF/BRAN/1; Alison Ronan has explored the networks of anti-war women in Manchester during the Great War: Alison Ronan, 'Fractured, Fragile, Creative: A Brief Analysis of Wartime Friendships Between Provincial Women Anti-War Activists, 1914–1918', *North West Labour History* (2011), pp. 21–30; Alison Ronan, '*A Small Vital Flame*': *Anti-War Women in NW England, 1914–1918* (Saarbrücken: Scholar's Press, 2014).

<sup>106</sup> Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland, 1870–1970* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2005), p. 148.

<sup>107</sup> Hunt, 'The Immense Meaning of it All', p. 24.

<sup>108</sup> WIL, *Nineteenth Yearly Report, March 1934–January 1935* (London: WIL, 1935). WILPF, III: British Section, Reel 70; Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland*, p. 154.



taking 1915 as a start point, it will examine the group's response to the Great War and the formation of the League of Nations. Ceadel has argued that the peace movement enjoyed a revival throughout the 1920s, inspired by a growing disenchantment with the security aims of the Great War and the prevailing hope for general disarmament.<sup>109</sup> He takes the 1931 Manchurian crisis as the start of the end for the peace movement. Similarly, Clavin argues that the 'failure of economic diplomacy' from 1929 onwards led to the collapse of economic internationalism, with obvious repercussions for international relations, which reached a turning point in 1931.<sup>110</sup> Zara Steiner considers 1929–1933 to be the turning point in European internationalism. Alternatively, this study extends beyond the period that Steiner has dubbed the 'hinge years' of the early 1930s – when nationalism resurfaced.<sup>111</sup> This study will take 1935 as its notional end point to consider WIL's response to the international crises of the early 1930s, when Italian aggression towards Abyssinia prompted the 'failure of political centrism' and an irreconcilable debate about sanctions and collective security arose within both the peace movement and at the League of Nations.<sup>112</sup>

The interwar years were a crucial period for the British women's movement, which adapted its campaigns in the context of the extensions of the franchise in 1918 and 1928. Thus, this study will consider the British women's movement in the aftermath of suffrage to consider how feminists were active beyond 1928. Rather than considering either 1918 or 1928 to be endpoints of the women's movement as earlier scholars have done,<sup>113</sup> this study

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<sup>109</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 281.

<sup>110</sup> Patricia Clavin, *The Failure of Economic Diplomacy: Britain, Germany, France and the United States, 1931–1936* (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 2.

<sup>111</sup> Zara Steiner, *The Lights That Failed: European International History, 1919–1933* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 816.

<sup>112</sup> Helen McCarthy describes a 'failure of political centrism' from 1936 to 1939 in Helen McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism c.1918–45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 212.

<sup>113</sup> Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage*; Cheryl Law, *Suffrage and Power: The Women's Movement 1918–1928* (London: I.B Tauris, 1997).

explores the ongoing campaigns for citizenship, equal rights and representation that British feminists were engaged with at both the national and international level throughout the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>114</sup>

The early 1930s saw a number of changes in WIL. The makeup of the Executive Committee altered significantly, partly due to the passing of a number of veteran suffragists who had helped to establish the association.<sup>115</sup> A number of other founding members were drawn to alternative forms of activism.<sup>116</sup> Rifts appeared at the international level of WILPF over the association's response to fascism and the form of its international structure. Differences of opinion had arisen between the British branch and the International Executive Committee soon after the foundation of the association, and in 1935 WIL voted on whether to remain an official British section of the international league. WILPF's eighth congress held in Zurich, 3–8 September 1934, was called earlier than intended to deal with growing tensions within the association. Underlying the constitutional problems in WILPF was the 'question of whether the pursuit of peace on the lines laid down in our Constitution was feasible in the world of to-day', referring to the rising Fascism and Communism, and global economic problems.<sup>117</sup> Although this thesis, at times, ventures into the 1935–1939 period for the benefit of further explanation, it takes 1935 as its nominal end date, encompassing WIL's response to international crises including Manchuria, the rise of Nazism and Germany's subsequent withdrawal from the

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<sup>114</sup> Julie V. Gottlieb and Richard Toye eds., *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender and Politics in Britain, 1918–1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 2; Esther Breitenbach and Pat Thane eds., *Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the Twentieth Century: What Difference Did the Vote Make?* (London: Continuum, 2010).

<sup>115</sup> For example, Isabella Ford died in 1924 and Lady Kate Courtney died in 1929. Both had been influential founding members of WIL and prominent in the suffrage movement.

<sup>116</sup> For instance, Helena Swanwick, who served as both WIL's Chair (1916–1922) and President (1923–1929), along with Kathleen Courtney, WIL's Chair (1923–1933) and President (1932–1933) resigned their positions in the association but remained active in other organisations and maintained links with WIL throughout the period.

<sup>117</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1934), p. 3.

League of Nations, and Italy's invasion of Abyssinia. This thesis therefore will consider the association's first twenty years of activism for peace and women's rights.

### *Structure*

This thesis argues that WIL was an integral part of the British women's movement. It makes a distinct contribution to the historiography of British women's activism by highlighting the influence of internationalism within national and even local contexts. This argument unfolds over five chapters, which cover WIL's activism from 1915 to 1935. The first explores the foundations and workings of WIL. This chapter will analyse the association's feminist pacifism, which considered militarism to be the ultimate threat to feminism, as it asserted a role for women on the international political stage. A focus on the foundation of WIL as well as its structure and campaigns will reveal how a segment of the women's movement remained active during the Great War and interwar years.

The remaining chapters are thematic and cover the organisation's work during the interwar period. Chapter Two analyses WIL's campaigns for women's rights during the 1920s and 1930s. This chapter shows how WIL campaigned for further legal equality between men and women, as well as highlighting divergences between members on the issues relating to the rights and protection of working women.<sup>118</sup> Chapter Three demonstrates the organisation's gendered approach to peace to shed light on its contribution to international relations. WIL combined its campaigns for peace and women's citizenship and took a leading role in the women's movement for disarmament in the early 1930s. As such, both Chapters Two and Three demonstrate the influence of internationalism on WIL's domestic campaigns for women's rights and peace and the ability of WIL members to speak on the international political sphere.

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<sup>118</sup> Kingsley Kent, 'The Politics of Sexual Difference', p. 234.

Chapter Four investigates WIL's commitment to internationalism through an analysis of its organisational structure and its work at the transnational level – both through its interactions with other international women's associations and the League of Nations. This chapter will explore the divisions and tensions between WIL and WILPF, thus highlighting the complex dynamic between internationalism and national interests for British WIL members.<sup>119</sup> The final chapter considers the wider nexus of activism that WIL was a part of nationally and internationally. The association's broad concern for social justice, freedom and internationalism, alongside its feminism and pacifism brought it into close contact with a range of other voluntary associations and social movements. This chapter will explore shared interests, overlapping membership and collaborative campaigns to situate WIL in the vibrant field of British political culture during the interwar years.

Contributing to the expanding literature on the vibrancy of the interwar women's movement, this thesis draws on the scholarship of both the international and British campaigns to situate WIL within interwar activism. This study also illustrates the nature of transnational activism by examining the relationship between local branches, the national WIL and international WILPF. Moreover, this thesis considers the interconnectedness of WIL's activism. In particular, it shows how its broader aims of internationalism, social justice and freedom brought WIL into close contact with a range of social movements, whilst maintaining its unique identity as a feminist-pacifist transnational women's organisation.

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<sup>119</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 172.

## Chapter One

### The Formation and Workings of the Women's International League

In April 1915, a 'new chapter in the history of the world-wide women's movement' opened at The Hague.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 1,200 women from Europe and North America gathered to articulate their 'protest against this horrible war' and to maintain links cultivated in the international women's suffrage movement.<sup>2</sup> Amongst the delegates were British suffrage activists, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, Kathleen Courtney and Catherine Marshall. On their return to London in May 1915, these women became founding members of the Women's International League (WIL) – established to carry out the goals of the women's peace congress. As the British section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF), WIL advocated that women could make a vital 'contribution towards the solution of the great problems of the day' – namely, peace and international relations.<sup>3</sup>

This chapter will examine a major development in the history of the British women's movement by considering the association's formation; its convictions; and its structure and workings. In so doing, the first section will focus on the formation of WIL during the Great War, including its position in the wider international women's movement to draw attention to the national and international dynamic. The second part will analyse the convictions of WIL to demonstrate that both maternalism and a feminist critique of militarism shaped its feminist pacifism. This section will also question the assumption that pacifism and patriotism were incompatible. As a national branch of an international

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<sup>1</sup> Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, 'The Bond of Faith', *Towards Permanent Peace: A Record of the Women's International Congress* (September 1915), p. 17. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>2</sup> The Dutch Executive Committee, *Call to the Women of all Nations*, (1915); Costin, 'Feminism, Pacifism, Internationalism and the 1915 International Congress of Women', p. 301.

<sup>3</sup> The Dutch Executive Committee, *Call to the Women of all Nations*, (1915).

women's peace organisation, WIL considered its commitments to peace and internationalism to complement its patriotism and national interests. WIL's feminism, pacifism and internationalism inspired its early campaigns for women's suffrage; its opposition to conscription; as well as its support for transnational feminist networks; and the strengthening of international law. WIL and its founders developed a feminist theory of international relations that emphasised the contribution that women could make to the international political sphere. The final part of this chapter will demonstrate how WIL functioned as a British section of WILPF. A focus on the leadership of the Executive Committee, local branches, meetings and finances sheds light on the association's membership, its activities as well as some of its limitations during its formative years. Whilst this chapter will primarily focus on the establishment of WIL (1915–19), it will also use WIL's records from the 1920s and 1930s to interrogate the relationship between local, national and international activism through the period.

### **The international women's movement on the outbreak of the Great War and the formation of WIL**

The history of women's movements has tended to be nationally orientated, yet more recently, influential studies on the transnational connections between suffrage movements and the formation of international women's organisations have shed light on the diverse activism by and for women on an international level from the nineteenth century onwards.<sup>4</sup> From early transnational friendship networks and organisations, such as the World Women's Temperance Union, the international women's movement continued to expand

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<sup>4</sup> Sherrick, 'Toward Universal Sisterhood', pp. 655–61; Offen, *European Feminisms*; Christine Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned? Race, Class and Internationalism in the American and British Women's Movements, c. 1880s–1970s* (London: Routledge, 2004); Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*.

and develop during the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> The evolution of the international women's movement has been carefully documented by Leila Rupp, who describes the relationship between the 'big three' – the International Council of Women (ICW), the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) and WILPF – as a familial trajectory from 'grandmother, mother and daughter, as one gave birth to the other'.<sup>6</sup> As Karen Offen suggests, there was a 'surge of activism' at the international level during the interwar years as at least forty new international women's organisations were formed between 1915 and 1939 – including WILPF, Open Door International, Equal Rights International and the International Federation of University Women.<sup>7</sup> In addition, a number of supra-international women's organisations were formed to co-ordinate joint activity within the women's movement, such as the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations and the Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organisations.<sup>8</sup> Despite the interest in international women's organisations, we know less about how these international activities played out in the national arena. Internationalism clearly influenced the national and local activities of WIL, yet – as both the third part of this chapter and, in particular, Chapter Five will show – local and national connections were vital for making it work.

On the outbreak of war, the ICW and IWSA – which had been the major international women's associations during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

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<sup>5</sup> Stanley Holton, "To Educate Women into Rebellion", pp. 112–36; D'Itri, *Cross-Currents in the International Women's Movement*, p. 39; Helen Dampier, "'Going on with Our Little Movement in the Hum Drum-Way Which Alone Is Possible in a Land like This': Olive Schreiner and Suffrage Networks in Britain and South Africa, 1905–1913", *Women's History Review*, 25:4 (2016), pp. 536–50.

<sup>6</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 13.

<sup>7</sup> Nitza Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship, Women's Rights and International Organizations* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1999), p. 62; Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 259.

<sup>8</sup> Susan Zimmermann, 'Liaison Committees of International Women's Organizations and the Changing Landscapes of Women's Internationalism, 1920s to 1945', *Women and Social Movements, International* (Virginia: Alexander Street Press, n.d.), [http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/liaison\\_committees\\_of\\_international\\_womens\\_organizations\\_and\\_the\\_changing\\_landscape\\_of\\_womens\\_internationalism\\_1920s\\_to\\_1945](http://wasi.alexanderstreet.com/help/view/liaison_committees_of_international_womens_organizations_and_the_changing_landscape_of_womens_internationalism_1920s_to_1945).

– suspended the majority of their campaigns. It was a group of IWSA members who organised the 1915 congress at The Hague, responding to their organisation’s decision to postpone its international conference, which had been due to be held that June in Berlin.<sup>9</sup> A delegation of British women attended preliminary meetings held in Amsterdam at the Dutch Bureau of the National Society of Woman Suffrage in February 1915 to discuss the idea of an international women’s congress to be held later that year.<sup>10</sup> Representing a section of the suffrage movement that supported an immediate and permanent peace, WILPF grew directly out of the IWSA. Thus, the majority of women who gathered at The Hague two months later were members of national and international suffrage societies. The enfranchisement of women was a central concern at this peace congress, as well as an interest in the role of women in national and international politics, especially at the post-war negotiation table.<sup>11</sup> Demanding ‘equal political rights with men’ so that women could take an equal share of the responsibility for international affairs, WILPF connected women’s right to vote with the establishment of peace.<sup>12</sup> Pethick Lawrence commented that there was a ‘determination to be heard in the councils of the nations that decide the course of human destiny’ at the 1915 congress.<sup>13</sup> The discussions at The Hague raised the issue of women’s status and equal rights, which WILPF – along with other international women’s organisations – believed to be transnational matters.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Marie Stritt, ‘Letters’, *Jus Suffragii*, (December 1914).

<sup>10</sup> Chrystal Macmillan, Theodora Wilson Wilson, Kathleen D. Courtney, Catherine Marshall and Emily Leaf attended the meetings in Amsterdam in February 1915, WIL, *Towards Permanent Peace* (1915), p. 6. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>11</sup> Women’s Peace Party, *Report of the International Congress of Women, The Hague* (1915), pp. 8–11. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 13–15.

<sup>13</sup> Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, ‘The Bond of Faith’, *Towards Permanent Peace*, p. 17. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>14</sup> Karen Offen argues that the international women’s movement remained active during the inter-war years; WILPF was ‘undoubtedly the most ambitious, broadest-scope international women’s organisation in operation during the interwar period’: Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 360.



Even though the 1915 congress marked a ‘new chapter’ in the international women’s movement, WILPF’s aims for peace had links to the earlier movement. The ICW, which was founded in the United States of America in 1888, created its International Standing Committee on Peace and Arbitration in 1899 – the same year as the first intergovernmental conference on peace and disarmament held at The Hague.<sup>15</sup> The Peace Committee of the National Council of Women of Great Britain (NCW) – its British affiliate – was formed in June 1914, chaired by Dame Elizabeth Cadbury, who also convened the ICW’s peace committee.<sup>16</sup> During the war the NCW’s peace committee ‘did what it could to promote intelligent opinion, right judgement and an atmosphere of goodwill’ mainly through a series of public talks – including one from WIL’s Chair, Helena Swanwick on the ‘Work of the Women’s International League’ in 1916.<sup>17</sup> Nonetheless, the all-encompassing nature of the ICW meant that its commitments were often vague.<sup>18</sup> Although the British National Council of Women’s peace committee followed the outcomes of the 1915 women’s peace congress with interest, it did not take an active role in the formation of WIL, which was formed as a uniquely feminist-pacifist association. In comparison, the IWSA had promoted peace before the outbreak of the Great War. Created in 1904 by a breakaway group of ICW members, the IWSA took a more active stance on women’s suffrage.<sup>19</sup> During the prelude to war in 1914, the IWSA called on national governments ‘to avert the threatened unparalleled disaster’.<sup>20</sup> However, as has been noted, the IWSA deferred its biennial congress until after the Great War and suspended its international work for suffrage. Instead, the association used its London

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<sup>15</sup> International Council of Women, *Second Quinquennial Meeting* (1899). TWL@LSE, 5ICW/B/04.

<sup>16</sup> ICW, *Work of the Peace Committee of the National Council of Women of Great Britain* (c.1933), p. 2. TWL@LSE, 5ICW/E/22.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>18</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 19.

<sup>19</sup> Mineke Bosch and Annemarie Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship: Letters from the International Woman Suffrage Alliance, 1902–1942* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1990), p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> IWSA, *The International Manifesto of Women*, 1 August 1914. Archive of the International Women’s Suffrage Alliance, The John Rylands University Library, The University of Manchester, IWSA/1/14.

headquarters to support foreign women stranded in Britain during the conflict and many of its members were engaged in wartime relief provision.<sup>21</sup>

Nevertheless, a significant number of suffragists remained committed to securing peace after the outbreak of war. Mary Sheepshanks, a British suffragist, used her position as editor of the IWSA's monthly journal, *Jus Suffragii*, to keep transnational links between suffragists alive throughout the war.<sup>22</sup> Sheepshanks also urged IWSA members to attend the Hague Congress, stating:

International solidarity is one of the strongest weapons in our hands. No one who has ever attended an international women's congress will ever forget the strength and encouragement given by contact and co-operation with women from all countries. If the world war is not to set back the whole women's movement, international co-operation is more necessary than ever.<sup>23</sup>

International networks of solidarity were indeed of high importance to both the ICW and IWSA. Yet national tensions during the Great War revealed the fragility of such bonds. The 1915 Hague Congress aimed to maintain the internationalism of the women's movement despite the conflict. Divides among IWSA members over the appropriate course of action during the Great War led a significant proportion of its leading figures to form a new organisation to represent their ongoing commitment to women's rights, peace and internationalism. A unique and, at times, radical organisation, WILPF formalised the women's movement's interest in peace in relation to its feminist aims.

### ***The establishment of a British section***

At the end of the Hague Congress, delegates opted to establish the International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace (ICWPP). Representatives returned to their home nations inspired by the hope and solidarity displayed at The Hague to inaugurate national branches

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<sup>21</sup> IWSA, *Circular Letter*, 11 August 1914. IWSA/1/14.

<sup>22</sup> Mary Sheepshanks to Aletta Jacobs, 18 September 1914. John Ryland Library, IWSA/1/15; Sybil Oldfield, 'Mary Sheepshanks Edits and Internationalist Suffrage Monthly in Wartime: *Jus Suffragii* 1914–19', *Women's History Review*, 12:1 (2006), p. 122.

<sup>23</sup> Mary Sheepshanks to IWSA members, 11 March 1915. John Rylands Library, IWSA/1/14.

of the new women's peace organisation. The British delegates to The Hague became founding members of the British national section: the Women's International League, one of the most active branches of the association. A closer analysis of these formative months is important for understanding WIL's *raison d'être* as well as the specific circumstances under which this organisation was founded.

Despite only three British women being present at The Hague, a significant number of activist women had responded to the Dutch invitation to participate in the event.<sup>24</sup> In February 1915, a group of British suffragists – Chrystal Macmillan, Theodora Wilson Wilson, Kathleen Courtney, Catherine Marshall and Emily Leaf – met with colleagues from Germany, Belgium and Holland in Amsterdam to discuss preparations for the proposed congress.<sup>25</sup> On their return to Britain, they helped to establish the British Committee of the International Women's Congress, with the principal aim of co-ordinating travel preparations and publicising the resolutions of the international women's congress. Women founded local committees in Birmingham, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Keswick, Leeds, Liverpool, Newcastle and Dublin to carry out this work.<sup>26</sup> The national committee urged 'all women interested in the prevention of future wars and the improvement of international relations' to support the committee and to attend the international congress.<sup>27</sup> A range of women active in suffrage, labour and social reform societies joined – including representatives of the Women's Co-operative Guild, the Independent Labour Party, the Women's Labour League, the Women's Freedom League and the Irish Women's Franchise League. Although several of the societies affiliated to the National Union of Women's

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<sup>24</sup> The Dutch Executive Committee, *Call to the Women of all Nations*, (1915). WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>25</sup> WIL, *Towards Permanent Peace* (May 1915), p. 6. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>26</sup> WIL, 'Support in This Country', *Towards Permanent Peace* (1915), p. 7. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>27</sup> British Committee of the International Women's Congress, *Circular Letter – The Journey to The Hague*, 27 March 1915. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) did want to send delegates to the women's peace congress, the NUWSS Executive declined the invitation to send representatives to The Hague.<sup>28</sup>

Some 283 British women declared their public and financial support for the aims of the Hague congress, including 180 who applied for permits to travel to the Netherlands.<sup>29</sup> The British government was reluctant to allow a group of women, particularly suffragist women, to travel close to the front line of war where enemy agents could target them for information on British military tactics. Lady Courtney of Penwith – a wealthy patron of women's suffrage – used her political connections through her husband, Liberal politician Sir Leonard Henry Courtney, to secure a meeting with the Lord Chancellor, Richard Haldane. In turn, Haldane persuaded the Home Secretary, Reginald McKenna to grant travel permits to twenty-five of the women, deemed to be of 'well-known thought'.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, wartime disruptions to the shipping routes across the Channel prevented the British delegates from reaching The Hague, 'and at Tilbury they remained until the Congress was over'.<sup>31</sup> Courtney and Macmillan were already in Europe providing relief to war victims in Belgium and Salonika. Pethick Lawrence was on a suffrage speaking tour of the United States and travelled across the Atlantic with the American delegates to complete the trio of British women at The Hague.

Ten days after the close of the women's congress, the British Committee organised meetings at Westminster Central Hall to receive reports from The Hague. Kathleen Courtney, newly elected ICWPP President Jane Addams, Italian member Rosa Genoi, and

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<sup>28</sup> WIL, 'Support in This Country', *Towards Permanent Peace* (1915), p. 7. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16; Jo Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote: The Erosion of Democratic Suffragism in Britain During the First World War* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> Sybil Oldfield, 'England's Cassandras in World War One', in Sybil Oldfield ed., *This Working-Day World, Women's Lives and Culture(s) in Britain, 1914–1945* (London: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1994), p. 89.

<sup>30</sup> Kate Courtney, *Extracts from a Diary During the War* (London: The Victor Press, 1927), p. 34; 'House of Commons', *The Times*, 28 April 1915, p. 12.

<sup>31</sup> 'No Boats for Women', *Daily Mail*, 20 April 1915, p. 3; WIL, *Towards Permanent Peace*, p. 7. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

Dutch organiser Aletta Jacobs addressed the gathering. Female trade unionist Margaret Bondfield presented a resolution stating ‘that the present Executive Committee be appointed pro tem, to carry on the organisation, that it draft and circulate a proposed constitution’, which was carried unanimously.<sup>32</sup> Treasurer of the British Committee, Mina B. Hubbard Ellis made an appeal for funds to cover offices, a paid secretary, printing and postage, distribution of publications, and the international work of the ICWPP – including a contribution towards the women’s conference scheduled during the post-war negotiations.<sup>33</sup> The British Committee of the International Women’s Congress had sent £150 to the headquarters based in Amsterdam of the newly formed ICWPP to fund its inaugural international work, including travel costs for the envoys sent out from The Hague.<sup>34</sup> This was the first of regular contributions from the British section to the international headquarters of the association. A year after its foundation, WIL donated a further £50 to the International Executive.<sup>35</sup> WILPF relied on donations and subscriptions of individual members and national sections to fund its work.

On 13 May, the British Committee held a public meeting to advertise the outcomes of the Hague Congress. Chaired by Helena Swanwick, ‘the crowded platform’ also included Lady Courtney, Margaret Bondfield, Margaret Llewelyn Davies, Katharine and John Bruce Glasier, Emmeline and Frederick Pethick Lawrence, Mary Macarthur, Bertrand Russell and Jane Addams, who had travelled to Britain following the Hague congress.<sup>36</sup> Swanwick articulated a key role for women in her call for a societal shift away from jingoism and militarism, arguing that ‘we can change for evil as well as for good. The past proves it, and the future shall prove it yet more. And *this* is one of the ideas we are

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<sup>32</sup> ‘The Hague Delegates in London’, *Towards Permanent Peace* (1915), p. 24.

<sup>33</sup> Mina B. Hubbard Ellis, ‘What can be done at once’, *Towards Permanent Peace* (1915), p. 24.

<sup>34</sup> Rosa Manus to Mina Hubbard Ellis, 19 May 1915. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>35</sup> Rosa Manus to Irene Cooper Willis, 19 September 1917. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>36</sup> ‘The Kingsway Hall Meeting’, *Towards Permanent Peace* (1915), p. 20.

changing, we women – that hate must always rule.’<sup>37</sup> The meeting was well attended; Lady Courtney remarked on the turnout, reporting in her diary that she ‘was surprised after the Lusitania at our success, numbers and quality’.<sup>38</sup> Members of the formative British section of the women’s peace association sought to maximise publicity surrounding Jane Addams’ visit to Britain.<sup>39</sup> Supporters organised ‘a busy week with meetings and parties’ in London and Cambridge to advertise the outcomes of the congress.<sup>40</sup>

The inaugural conference of the British section of the ICWPP was held on 30 September and 1 October at Caxton Hall, Westminster. After much discussion, the section adopted the title ‘Women’s International League’ (WIL).<sup>41</sup> Its name distinguished it from being merely a national section of the ICWPP whilst avoiding negative connotations associated with pacifism. National sections operated with a degree of autonomy, yet WIL aimed to ‘carry on the work initiated at The Hague by the International Congress of Women in April, and to give practical expression in this country to its policy’.<sup>42</sup> WIL produced its own constitution and objects, which mirrored the aims of its international partner:

The objects as defined last week are as follows: - (1) The establishment of the principle of right rather than might and of co-operation for conflict in national and international affairs. (2) The emancipation of women and the protection of their interests, including (a) their admission to the Parliamentary franchise, (b) their admission to national and international councils, (c) the establishment of their economic independence and legal freedom.<sup>43</sup>

WIL’s broad objects incorporated concerns for international relations; democratic control of foreign policy; the right to national self-determination and ‘the abandonment of the

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Kate Courtney, *Extracts for a Diary During the War* (London: The Victor Press, 1927), p. 35.

<sup>39</sup> ‘Miss Jane Addams: Her impressions of the Congress of Women’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 14 May 1915, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, p. 35.

<sup>41</sup> WIL, Inaugural Conference of the Women’s International League, 30 September – 1 October 1915, Report. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>42</sup> Account of the Women’s International League as constituted in London’, *News Sheet* 5, Appendix V (1915). WILPF, VI, Reel 110.

<sup>43</sup> WIL, ‘Account of the Women’s International League’, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1915), Appendix V.

theory of the balance of power'. WIL also resolved to lobby for a body of international law to promote the use of arbitration and conciliation to resolve international disputes. In addition, the association was concerned with the protection of minorities and vulnerable members of society, including the rights and interests of women, children and young people.<sup>44</sup> Some members extended their concern for the vulnerable, proposing that the association, 'as the natural guardian of the weak and helpless' should also lobby government for the protection of animals. Yet, delegates at the 1919 Council meeting opted to leave this issue to 'societies formed for the purpose'.<sup>45</sup> One of the section's most immediate concerns following its establishment was the attendance of British representatives at the ICWPP's proposed congress at the end of the Great War.<sup>46</sup>

Nonetheless, peace activism during the war was heavily restricted. WIL, along with other associations, was placed under surveillance and their publications were subject to censorship.<sup>47</sup> Police raided WIL's headquarters on 7 November 1917 and seized copies of its pamphlet titled 'Democracy and Peace'.<sup>48</sup> The association encouraged its members to take a radical stance against the war. 'Live Dangerously' became WIL's motto, which was embroidered onto its banner in 1917. The standard included a ship braving a stormy sea, as well as the English rose, Scottish thistle and Prince of Wales' feathers to depict the national make-up of WIL during the tempestuous climate of war. Subverting the imagery of war and nationalism, the association argued that its iconography was 'more appropriate to the ventures of faith than to those of the armed force'.<sup>49</sup> WIL also adopted the royal motto 'Ich dien' to indicate 'the women's desire to serve, with the pacifist's desire of

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> WIL, *Annual Council Meeting, Minutes*, 30–31 October 1919, p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> David S. Patterson, *The Search for Negotiated Peace: Women's Activism and Citizen Diplomacy in World War I* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 234.

<sup>48</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1917), p. 4.

<sup>49</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1916), p. 5.

magnanimity and generosity in all things'.<sup>50</sup> As this example demonstrates, WIL members used a rhetoric of service and duty in relation to their commitment to peace during wartime.

Despite the widespread nationalist fervour in Britain, WIL members did succeed in maintaining communication with WILPF colleagues during the war, although it was limited. For instance, many WIL members signed an open letter to 'enemy' women in Germany and Austria. The letter appealed to a sense of 'common womanhood'.<sup>51</sup> The following year, German suffragists and WILPF members, replied. The German letter referred to a 'true sisterhood' between women despite the Great War.<sup>52</sup> In addition, Chrystal Macmillan joined one of WILPF's envoy missions to present its plan for a conference of neutrals to government representatives across Europe in 1915.<sup>53</sup> The delegates reported that 'all [the government ministers] apparently, recognized without argument that an expression of the public opinion of a large body of women had every claim to consideration in questions of war and peace'.<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, international meetings were difficult to organise during the war, members held ad-hoc meetings in neutral or allied nations where possible.

In May 1919, WILPF managed to convene its second congress. Despite its plan to hold this event at the same time and place as the peace negotiations, women from 'enemy

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> 'To the Women of Germany and Austria, Open Christmas Letter', *Jus Suffragii* (January 1915).

<sup>52</sup> 'Greetings from Suffragists', *Jus Suffragii* (February 1916).

<sup>53</sup> Rosika Schwimmer (Austria-Hungary), Chrystal Macmillan (United Kingdom), Cor Ramondt-Hirschman (Holland) and Emily Greene Balch (United States) travelled to Scandinavia and Russia. Schwimmer, however, could not enter Russia, an 'enemy country'. Jane Addams (USA), Aletta Jacobs (Holland) and Rosa Genoi (Italy) travelled to Great Britain, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Switzerland, Italy, France, and visited the Belgian Government at le Havre. WIL, 'The Women Envoys', *Towards a Permanent Peace* (1915), pp. 25–26. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16. See also, Anne Wiltsher, *Most Dangerous Women, Feminist Peace Campaigners of the Great War* (London: Pandora Press, 1985); WIL, "The Women Envoys", *Towards a Permanent Peace* (1915), p. 18. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>54</sup> Emily Greene Balch, 'At the Northern Capitals' in Jane Addams, Emily Greene Balch and Alice Hamilton, *Women at the Hague, the International Congress of Women and Its Results* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003), p. 52; Harriet Hyman Alonso 'Introduction' in Addams, Balch and Hamilton, *Women at The Hague*, p. xxv.



nations' could not travel to Paris. The association selected Zurich as a neutral venue.<sup>55</sup> 147 attended the meetings in Switzerland, including twenty-six British delegates.<sup>56</sup> By coincidence, the women's congress opened on the same day as the publication of the peace treaty.<sup>57</sup> Although WILPF could not meet in Paris, a number of its members, including two British women – Chrystal Macmillan and Charlotte Despard – lobbied the peacemakers.<sup>58</sup> The group articulated WILPF's disappointment that 'the terms of the Peace tacitly sanction secret diplomacy, deny the principles of self-determination, recognise the right of the victors to the spoils of war, and create all over Europe discords and animosities, which can only lead to future wars'.<sup>59</sup> As this statement suggests, the association continued to promote peace beyond 1918, urging for a strengthening of the League of Nations.<sup>60</sup>

### **Convictions: WIL's feminist pacifism**

WIL's initial purpose was to lobby for an end to the Great War. In 1920, Helena Swanwick justified the continuation of WIL's activism beyond the signing of the armistice – arguing that 'there are, of course, a good many organisations of more and less advanced feminists, but none which makes just the connection that we do between feminism and the abolition of war'.<sup>61</sup> Sitting at the intersection of the women's and peace movements, WIL considered its peace activism a fundamental aspect of its feminism. The association's commitment to

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<sup>55</sup> Correspondence between WILPF members shows that Paris and The Hague were also considered as venues for the organisation's 1919 Congress: Jane Addams to Aletta Jacobs, 10 December 1918. WILPF, Series II, Reel 35.

<sup>56</sup> British delegates to the Zurich Congress: Margaret Ashton, Catherine Marshall, Harriet Briggs, Kathleen D. Courtney, Helen Crawford, Charlotte Despard, Gertrude Eaton, Mrs Anderson Fenn, Isabella Ford, Mrs Giles, Florence Hardcastle, Annabel Huth Jackson, Emily Leaf, Chrystal Macmillan, Eva Macnaghten, Annot Robinson, Kathleen Royds, Hon. Mrs Rollo Russell, Mary Sheepshanks, Ellen Wilkinson, Helena Swanwick and Ada Salter. WIL, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich* (WIL: London, 1921). WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>57</sup> WIL, *Towards Peace and Freedom* (August 1919), p. 6. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>58</sup> Chrystal Macmillan and Charlotte Despard of the British WIL, joined Jane Addams (USA), Gabrielle Duchêne (France), Rosa Genoi (Italy) and Clara Ragaz (Switzerland) in Paris, Chrystal Macmillan, 'Deputation to the Peace Conference', *Towards Peace and Freedom* (1919), p. 17. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>59</sup> WIL, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich* (WIL: London, 1921), p. 18. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>60</sup> WILPF, *Resolutions Presented to the Peace Conference of the Powers in Paris* (1919). WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>61</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, 'A Regiment of Women', *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1920), p. 2.

peace was intricate – influenced by both the ideas of difference and equality between men and women, which has led scholars of the British peace movement to deem WIL’s pacifism as confused.<sup>62</sup> At times, the association asserted that women were more suited to peacemaking than men due to their experiences as mothers. Yet, WIL combined maternalism with a radical feminist critique of militarism, and an emphasis on peace and women’s rights as transnational matters. The following section unpacks these concerns, tracing both their history and the way in which WIL members articulated them.

### ***Maternalism***

Writing in the nineteenth century, Bertha von Suttner – the author of the iconic pacifist novel *Die Waffen Nieder!* (1889) and the first female recipient of the Nobel Prize for Peace – expressed a gendered response to the question of war. Martha von Tilling, the protagonist in Suttner’s novel expressed her revulsion to war through her maternal instincts.<sup>63</sup> Suttner’s gendered pacifism influenced many of those who went on to lead WILPF, in particular German feminists Lida Gustava Heymann and Anita Augspurg.<sup>64</sup> In Britain, motherhood and women’s responsibilities to the future of the race were popularly linked to nation-building and imperial concerns.

The British women’s movement responded to the conflict in South Africa (1899–1902) in contrasting ways. Emily Hobhouse was a leading critic of the methods used by the British, expressing concern for the plight of women and children non-combatants. Notably, Hobhouse’s work in South Africa brought her into contact with Aletta Jacobs, the Dutch

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<sup>62</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, p. 87.

<sup>63</sup> Bertha von Suttner, *Lay Down Your Arms: The Autobiography of Martha von Tilling* (London: Longmans Green & Co, 1908), p. 48.

<sup>64</sup> Regina Braker, ‘Bertha Von Suttner’s Spiritual Daughters. The Feminist Pacifism of Anita Augspurg , Lida Gustava Heymann , and Helene Stocker at the International Congress of Women at The Hague, 1915’, *Women’s Studies International Forum* 18:2 (1995), pp. 103–11; Amira Gelblum, ‘Ideological Crossroads, Feminism, Pacifism and Socialism’, in Billie Melman ed., *Borderlines: Genders and Identities in War and Peace, 1870–1930* (New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 307.

feminist who took the lead in organising the 1915 women's peace congress.<sup>65</sup> Hobhouse subsequently penned an open letter to German and Austrian women in 1914, which was signed by many leading suffragists who went on to found WIL the following year.<sup>66</sup> In contrast, Millicent Garrett Fawcett, President of the NUWSS, produced a patriotic report after her visit to South Africa. Notably, both women employed gendered arguments about war and challenged the male sphere of international politics, preceding WIL's campaigns after its formation.<sup>67</sup>

A discourse of nationalism, imperialism and patriotism in the context of the Boer War permeated feminist rhetoric.<sup>68</sup> Anna Davin's influential work demonstrates that a 'powerful ideology of motherhood emerged' and that concerns over the birth rate at the turn of the century had imperialist implications for maternal responsibility.<sup>69</sup> The British state's crisis of confidence over the poor health of its troops led to an emphasis on the role of mothers in relation to the health of the nation.<sup>70</sup> Eileen Yeo has shown that activist women in Britain and France subverted this rhetoric of motherhood. 'Citizen mothers' attached the demand for female citizenship to the discourse of motherhood and women's unique role in relation to the population.<sup>71</sup> In comparison, feminist-pacifist Olive Schreiner used motherhood to lobby for peace and women's rights in her text *Women and Labour* (1911), claiming that 'on that day when the woman takes her place beside the man in the

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<sup>65</sup> Mineke Bosch, 'Colonial Dimensions of Women's Suffrage: Aletta Jacobs's Travel Letters from Africa and Asia, 1911–1912', *Journal of Women's History*, 11:2 (1999), p. 26.

<sup>66</sup> 'To the Women of Germany and Austria, Open Christmas Letter', *Jus Suffragii* (January 1915).

<sup>67</sup> Rebecca Gill, 'Networks of Concern, Boundaries of Compassion: British Relief in the South African War', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40:5 (2012), pp. 827–44; see also Rebecca Gill, *Calculating Compassion: Humanity and Relief in War, Britain 1870–1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013). Jo Vellacott describes how WIL challenged and extended the male defined political system: Jo Vellacott, 'Feminist Consciousness and the First World War', in Pierson ed., *Women and Peace*, p. 125.

<sup>68</sup> Brown, 'The Truest Form of Pacifism', p. 11.

<sup>69</sup> Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', pp. 9–65.

<sup>70</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 3; Jane Mackay and Pat Thane, 'The Englishwoman', in Robert Colls and Phillip Dodd eds., *Englishness: Politics and Culture 1880–1920* (Kent: Croom Helm, 1986), p. 203.

<sup>71</sup> Yeo, 'The Creation of "Motherhood"', p. 212.

governance and arrangement of external affairs of her race will also be that day that heralds the death of war'.<sup>72</sup> It is clear that WIL built on existing feminist-pacifist ideas.

Nineteenth-century international conflicts raised concerns for peace and internationalism. In 1889, the Inter-Parliamentary Union brought together politicians in support of arbitration. Liberal peace societies – such as the London Peace Society – and the Bureau International de la Paix were also established.<sup>73</sup> Both Sandi Cooper and David Cortright have noted that women were active participants in nineteenth-century peace organisations.<sup>74</sup> Yet, despite the presence of notable female pacifists – like Bertha von Suttner – women's voices were often lost in the male dominated societies. Thus, it was not until the formation of WILPF that the concept of feminist pacifism found its own forum.<sup>75</sup>

The Great War reinvigorated the peace movement and concerns for non-combatants in the belligerent nations.<sup>76</sup> The use of maternal rhetoric during the 1914–1918 war was complex and was used as a 'political catalyst' by both patriots and feminist-pacifists.<sup>77</sup> Patriotic propaganda evoked images of mothers' national service and imperial visions of women as 'mothers of the race'.<sup>78</sup> Yet, WIL also used maternal rhetoric alongside its radical opposition to militarism, adopting a language of maternal responsibility and expressing its horror in relation to the loss of human life caused by the Great War. Ann Taylor Allen argues that 'by 1914, the discourse on motherhood was so prevalent and powerful in the feminist movement that it encompassed the widest possible spectrum of

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<sup>72</sup> Schreiner also demonstrated the immense value of women as mothers to the conduct of war: 'We have in all ages produced, at an enormous cost, the primal munition of war', Olive Schreiner, *Women and Labour* (London: T.F. Unwin, 1911), pp. 169–170.

<sup>73</sup> Sandi E. Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism, Waging War on War in Europe, 1815–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.; Cortright, *Peace*, p. 3.

<sup>75</sup> Schott, *Reconstructing Women's Thoughts*, p. 12.

<sup>76</sup> Davin, 'Imperialism and Motherhood', p. 43; Karen Offen, 'Body Politics: Women, Work and the Politics of Motherhood in France, 1920–1950', in Bock and Thane eds., *Maternity and Gender Policies*, p. 140.

<sup>77</sup> Sharon Ouditt, *Fighting Forces, Writing Women: Identity and Ideology in the First World War* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 132; Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 1.

<sup>78</sup> Yeo, 'The Creation of "Motherhood"', p. 202.

positions, from strident nationalism to pacifism'.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, the use of maternalism by different factions of the women's movement in 1915 represents continuity with the earlier women's movement, which also displayed comparable variety of feminist thought.

Maternal rhetoric permeated the discussions at the Hague congress. Introducing the report of the Hague congress, Hobhouse claimed that the meetings had demonstrated the 'perfect unanimity of motherhood'.<sup>80</sup> Despite their different national and class backgrounds, she argued, women measured the war in terms of the cost of family members, including their 'fathers, brothers, husbands, and sons, who march out to war never to return'.<sup>81</sup> Similarly, Jane Addams argued that peace should be based on more than just reason – asserting that a desire for peace was rooted in 'those primitive human urgings to foster life and to protect the helpless of which women were the earliest custodians'.<sup>82</sup> This discourse helped to create a unique identity for the women's peace organisation as women shared a maternal identity and loss of family members that traversed borders. Nevertheless, motherhood as a basis for transnational solidarity was weak and lost its pertinence during the interwar years. WILPF's feminism, pacifism and internationalism through the 'common heart of humanity' provided a stronger base for its transnationalism.<sup>83</sup> Yet WILPF's maternal pacifism facilitated its exceptional character. Unlike male-dominated anti-war organisations, WILPF carved itself a unique place within the peace movement as a transnational association of women – connecting women's status and gender roles to the issues of war and peace, often expressed through maternal rhetoric.

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<sup>79</sup> Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Germany, 1800–1914* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1991), p. 233; see also, Ann Taylor Allen, *Feminism and Motherhood in Western Europe, 1890–1970. The Maternal Dilemma* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>80</sup> Emily Hobhouse, 'Foreword', *Bericht–Rapport–Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>81</sup> WIL, 'Evening Meetings', *Towards Peace and Freedom* (1915), p. 12. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>82</sup> Jane Addams, "Presidential Address", *Bericht–Rapport–Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>83</sup> Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, 'The Bond of Faith', *Towards Permanent Peace* (1915), p. 17. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

Catherine Marshall – who served on WIL’s Executive Committee almost continuously between 1915 and 1935 – condemned militarism as an ‘outrage on motherhood’, considering war to be a waste of women’s work in raising children.<sup>84</sup> Along with other leading figures in the NUWSS, she resigned her post as an Honorary Secretary in March 1915 – a month after attending the meetings in Amsterdam to plan the women’s peace congress.<sup>85</sup> The NUWSS advocated support of the war effort to legitimise its claim to the franchise. Marshall, on the other hand, believed the best way to ‘serve our country, and the best way in which we could continue to serve the cause of Women’s Suffrage’ was to promote peace. In her resignation letter, she described the campaign for a just settlement of the war as logical extension of the suffrage movement.<sup>86</sup> Thus, it is evident that some members of the women’ peace association linked maternal responsibility and peace to their campaign for women’s enfranchisement. At The Hague, Hungarian feminist Rosika Schwimmer asserted that women needed suffrage ‘to protect the race itself, for what was the use of looking after babies if in a short time they were again to be without protection’.<sup>87</sup> Similarly, Jacobs claimed that the interests of maintaining the race were of ultimate importance during the war ‘and, since by virtue of our womanhood, these interests are to us of greater sanctity and value, women must have a voice in governments of all countries’.<sup>88</sup> Evidently, Jacobs directly linked women’s traditional roles as ‘mothers of the

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<sup>84</sup> Catherine Marshall, ‘Women and War’ in Margaret Kamester & Jo Vellacott eds., *Militarism versus Feminism: Writings on Women and War* (London: Virago Press, 1987), p. 40.

<sup>85</sup> The four other British representatives at the preliminary meetings in February were Chrystal Macmillan, Theodora Wilson, Kathleen D. Courtney and Emily Leaf. WIL, *Towards Permanent Peace* (1915), p. 17. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16; Letter from Millicent Garrett Fawcett to Secretaries of Federations and Societies, 23 April 1915. BLPES, WILPF/4/1; Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*, p. 41.

<sup>86</sup> Catherine Marshall, Letter to the Executive Committee, 9 March 1915. BLPES, WILPF/4/1. Kathleen Courtney, Alice Clark, Isabella Ford, Katherine Harley, Margaret Ashton, Emily Leaf, Helena Swanwick, Maude Royden and Cary Schuster also tendered their resignation to the NUWSS Executive Committee, March/April 1915.

<sup>87</sup> WIL, *Towards Peace and Freedom* (1915), p. 13. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16; Dagmar Wernitznig, ‘Out of Her Time? Rosika Schwimmer’s Transnational Activism after the First World War’, *Women’s History Review*, (August 2016), DOI: 10.1080/09612025.2016.1181338.

<sup>88</sup> Aletta Jacobs, ‘Address of Welcome’, *Bericht–Rapport–Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

race' to their understanding of the death toll during the war and to the crusade for political enfranchisement.

Likewise, WIL's Chair Helena Swanwick was highly critical of war, which she described as a 'silly, bloody game of massacring sons of women'. Although many of WIL's leading members never had children, the organisation condemned war as a devastating loss of human life. Swanwick wrote in her autobiography that 'till 1914 I had never been quite able to suppress my great longing to have children of my own, but then I was indeed glad I had none'.<sup>89</sup> Maternalist rhetoric thus did not consider motherhood to be a purely biological function, the association used women's roles as 'mothers' in their campaign for the abolition of war. Yet, WIL did acknowledge that not all women were opposed to the Great War. Maude Royden, a member of WIL's Executive Committee, wrote that her belief that women were innately more pacifist than men had 'been severely shaken, if not altogether destroyed' during the conflict.<sup>90</sup> It is clear that both patriotic and pacifist feminists were deeply influenced by prevailing discourse on maternal duty and the nation.<sup>91</sup>

However, the women's movement's use of maternalism has led some scholars to assume that the Great War signalled a decline in feminism's claim to equality.<sup>92</sup> Susan Kingsley Kent claims that the women's movement lost its radical edge as it seemingly accepted traditional notions of difference between the sexes and reaffirmed the notion of separate spheres; yet she overlooks the prevailing influence of maternalism on feminism before 1914.<sup>93</sup> Yet, as Kathleen Kennedy suggests, maternalism had no fixed meaning and

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<sup>89</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 246.

<sup>90</sup> Royden, *War and the Woman's Movement*, p. 6.

<sup>91</sup> Jane Lewis, *Women in England, 1870–1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Brighton: Wheatsheaf, 1984); Joy Damousi and Marilyn Lake, *Gender and War: Australians at War in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 5.

<sup>92</sup> Evans, *Comrades and Sisters*, p. 121.

<sup>93</sup> Kingsley Kent, 'The Politics of Sexual Difference', p. 232.

was used in different ways by women in relation to class, citizenship, national identity, and gender differences.<sup>94</sup> Feminist maternalism influenced the women's movement and politics in many ways during the twentieth century.<sup>95</sup>

The language used by WIL members demonstrates how gendered assumptions about women's roles influenced activists. Although historians have debated whether an emphasis on gender difference undermines the women's history project, it has influenced recent literature on the ebb and flow of the women's movement.<sup>96</sup> As Marie Sandell suggests a 'false dichotomy between equality and difference' accounts of the women's movement have constructed.<sup>97</sup> Members of WIL used both 'difference' – as expressed through female gender roles in relation to motherhood – and lobbied for equality between the sexes. Thus, its feminist pacifism was a combination of maternalist rhetoric and a more radical critique of militarism.

### *A feminist critique of militarism*

WIL's use of a pacifist maternal rhetoric could be interpreted as reinforcing essentialist gender notions. Understanding WIL's pacifism demands a closer inspection of the balance the association struck between highlighting the differences between women and men's gender roles and a more radical feminist critique of militarism. Not all feminist pacifists used maternal language. Laura Beers argues that most members in fact were driven by the historical subjection of women to campaign for those 'who had been ill-served by the existing world system'.<sup>98</sup> Yet, as suggested by Catia Cecelia Confortini, a heterogeneity of

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<sup>94</sup> Kennedy, *Disloyal Mothers*, p. 2.

<sup>95</sup> Seth Koven and Sonya Michel, *Mothers of a New World, Maternalist Politics and the Origins of Welfare States* (London: Routledge, 1993), p. 2; Bock and Thane, *Maternity and Gender Policies*, p. 7.

<sup>96</sup> Kingsley Kent, 'The Politics of Sexual Difference', p. 232; June Purvis, 'Women's History and Poststructuralism', *Women's History Review*, 5:1 (1996), pp. 5–7.

<sup>97</sup> Marie Sandell, 'Regional versus International: Women's Activism and Organisational Spaces in the Interwar Period', *The International History Review*, 33:4 (2011), p. 610.

<sup>98</sup> Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism', p. 204.



views on feminism and pacifism underlined the 1915 congress and the organisation's subsequent decisions.<sup>99</sup> Swanwick challenged concerns that pacifism and femininity – associated with motherhood – were fundamentally passive, calling on women to be active and assertive in their anti-militarism: 'we women are pacifists at heart, but we have been too much passivists'. Moreover, rather than assuming all women were inherently pacifist, Swanwick considered feminism and pacifism intertwined.<sup>100</sup> Campaigns for peace, she believed, went hand in hand with feminism's opposition to injustice. For the feminist-pacifists at The Hague, the enfranchisement of women would balance militarism, which would allow women to 'come into her full inheritance in a state, or a community life, which is founded not on force but on justice'.<sup>101</sup> These women saw peace as more than just the absence of war: 'peace is an active quality' linked to the alleviation of oppression, including the subjection of women.<sup>102</sup> The association made a radical claim for equal rights based on a gendered understanding of war and international relations.

Thus, WIL's feminist pacifism stemmed from a wider concern with the subjugation of women, as well as maternalism. Swanwick's 1915 pamphlet titled *Women and War* juxtaposed male militarism with peace, justice and equality, arguing that 'men make wars, not women'.<sup>103</sup> She was highly critical of the male desire for honour and domination, which privileged conflict and the oppression of women. Militarism, as the pinnacle of patriarchal tyranny, reduced women to mere 'breeders and slaves'.<sup>104</sup> Similarly, Emily Hobhouse described women as 'chief sufferers from war's curse'.<sup>105</sup> Feminist-pacifists

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<sup>99</sup> Confortini, *Intelligent Compassion*, p. 10.

<sup>100</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, 'Evening Speech', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>101</sup> Clara Ragaz, 'Address of Welcome', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>102</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, 'Evening Speech', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>103</sup> Swanwick, *Women and War*, p. 7.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Hobhouse, 'Foreword', *Bericht-Rapport-Report*. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

portrayed war as a direct threat to feminism. In March 1915, a pamphlet titled *Militarism versus Feminism* appeared as a supplement to the IWSA's *Jus Suffragii*.<sup>106</sup> The piece condemned militarism as the barrier to social reform, 'particularly the enfranchisement of women in every land'.<sup>107</sup> Read by formative members of WIL, *Militarism versus Feminism* encapsulated the core feminist-pacifist belief. Thus, opposition to war was part of the feminism of many WIL members, who stressed that 'militarism and the woman's movement cannot exist together'.<sup>108</sup>

To some extent, the impact of war upon the daily lives of women as non-combatants also shaped WIL's anti-militarism. In particular, its members objected to the restriction of civil liberties, which, they argued, disproportionately affected women on the home front. The Defence of the Realm Act (DORA), initiated during the first days of the Great War, censored the press and regulated the consumption of alcohol and food supplies. In 1917, the government extended DORA to tackle the problem of venereal disease amongst military personnel. Feminists challenged the unequal moral standard enshrined in regulation 40D relating to the spread of venereal diseases. The ruling made it illegal for a woman with a transmissible disease to solicit or have sex with a member of the armed forces. Helen Ward, a member of WIL's Executive Committee, described the procedure as 'insidious menaces to the freedom of women'.<sup>109</sup> Feminist protest against 40D mirrored earlier opposition to the Contagious Diseases Act.<sup>110</sup> Nevertheless, plans to reintroduce police powers to conduct compulsory medical examinations on female prostitutes were discarded due to considerable resistance.

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<sup>106</sup> Charles Ogden and suffragist Sargent Florence wrote *Militarism versus Feminism*, which first appeared in the *Cambridge Magazine* in April 1915. Kamester and Vellacott eds., *Militarism versus Feminism*, p. 21.

<sup>107</sup> Sargent Florence & C.K. Ogden, 'Militarism versus Feminism', *Jus Suffragii*, 1 March 1915, p. ii.

<sup>108</sup> Royden, *War and the Woman's Movement*.

<sup>109</sup> Ward, *A Venture in Goodwill*, p. 23.

<sup>110</sup> Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*, p. 30.

WIL also occasionally referred to sexual violence as ‘the horrible violation of women which attends all war’.<sup>111</sup> Sexual abuse as a weapon of war was a pertinent issue: reports of the ‘rape of Belgium’ permeated the British press during the early stages of the war.<sup>112</sup> Atrocity accounts called on a British sense of ‘honour’ to defend Belgium – referred to in gendered terms – as a victim of Prussian militarism.<sup>113</sup> Scandalous tales published in the Bryce Report – the outcome of the British commission on ‘alleged German outrages’ – were used in recruitment propaganda.<sup>114</sup> The protection of women and children from barbaric Prussianism played on notions of passive femininity and masculine heroism – which, both justified and idealised the war effort.<sup>115</sup> Yet, some pacifists questioned the credibility of these stories. Moreover, Swanwick challenged popular perceptions that Germany alone was responsible for the conflict.<sup>116</sup> Although some of its members doubted the validity of the atrocities, WIL advocated peace to prevent the ‘odious wrongs of which women are the victims in time of war’ without directly referring to Belgium.<sup>117</sup>

Moreover, WIL challenged British war aims, which focussed on the question of security. Dismissing the popular argument that men were ‘fighting for hearth and home’,

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<sup>111</sup> WPP, *Report of the International Congress of Women* (USA: Roy G. Harper, 1915), p. 11. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>112</sup> John Horne and Alan Kramer, *German Atrocities: A History of Denial* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), p. 204.

<sup>113</sup> Paul Ward, *Britishness Since 1870* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 41.

<sup>114</sup> Committee on Alleged German Outrages, *Report of the Committee on Alleged German Outrages* (London, 1915). British Library, B.S. 18/28, accessed on 10/10/2016 at <https://www.bl.uk/collection-items/bryce-report-committee-alleged-german-outrages>. For example, the recruitment poster with the slogan ‘For the Glory of Ireland, ‘Will you go or Must I?’ shows woman pointing to an image of Belgium in flames (1914) see Gullace, ‘*The Blood of Our Sons*’, Image Appendix.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid., p. 41; Nicoletta Gullace, ‘Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War’, *American Historical Review*, 102:3 (1997), 714–47.

<sup>116</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 244. John Horne and Alan Kramer argue that the contemporary pacifist reaction to the Bryce Report and ‘atrocity’ stories has determined historians’ assumptions that the atrocities were falsifications: John Horne and Alan Kramer, ‘German “Atrocities” and Franco-German Opinion , 1914: The Evidence of German Soldiers’ Diaries’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 66.1 (1994), 1–33.

<sup>117</sup> WPP, *Report of the International Congress of Women* (USA: Roy G. Harper, 1915), p. 11. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

Swanwick claimed that ‘security as a result of militarism is an illusion’.<sup>118</sup> The association highlighted the impact that aerial warfare and disruption to food supplies had on the home front.<sup>119</sup> Swanwick claimed that ‘two pieces of work for the human family are peculiarly the work of women: they are the life-givers and the home-makers’.<sup>120</sup> Employing notions of traditional domestic roles, WIL attempted to raise the voice of women on the politics of war by underlining their expertise within the domestic sphere. Likewise, Karen Hunt has demonstrated the potential of women’s wartime domestic roles to expand the ‘realm of politics with the everyday life of ordinary women’ during the Great War, through Food Vigilance Committees.<sup>121</sup> In contrast, WIL’s rhetoric both supported and challenged women’s traditional roles, opening new political arenas for women – in the local, national and international arenas – and contributed to the development of women’s activism after 1914.<sup>122</sup>

Challenging the militarist threat to the home, WIL used women’s domestic experiences, including motherhood, to contest the political status quo. The organisation argued that female maternal roles and prolonged subjugation provided women with a unique understanding of war and peace. WIL linked feminist pacifism to continued demands for the vote. WIL argued that the devastation of war illustrated that ‘never before was the need so great for the enfranchisement of the whole people, and especially of

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<sup>118</sup> Swanwick, *Women and War*, p. 7.

<sup>119</sup> Susan R. Grayzel, *At Home and Under Fire: Air Raids and Culture in Britain from the Great War to the Blitz* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), p. 3.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>121</sup> Karen Hunt, ‘The Politics of Food and Women’s Neighborhood Activism in First World War Britain’, *International Labor and Working-Class History*, 77 (2010), p. 22. Women in warring and neutral nations in continental Europe were also engaged with a politics of food, see Belinda J. Davis, *Food, Politics and Everyday Life in World War I Berlin* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Temma Kaplan, ‘Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910–1918’, *Signs*, 7:3 (1982), 545–66.

<sup>122</sup> Hunt, ‘The Politics of Food’, p. 9.

women'.<sup>123</sup> The organisation highlighted both the innate value of women's votes and how women, as enfranchised citizens, could help to create a permanent peace.

In its calls for women's suffrage, WIL challenged the anti-suffragist 'physical force' claims. Opponents of female suffrage had long used women's (lack of) physical strength and their subsequent omission from the armed forces to deny the extension of the franchise to women.<sup>124</sup> Swanwick and Royden argued that this preference for physical strength had wider implications, constructing unnecessary rivalries and an uneasy system of alliances between nations. International relations based on 'physical force' ensured 'the eternal necessity of war' and the domination of the great powers over smaller nation-states.<sup>125</sup> WIL linked militarism or 'physical force' to both the oppression of women and small states, articulating a feminist theory of international relations. Alternatively, the association lobbied for 'an assertion of moral force as the supreme governing force in the world'. A system based on 'moral force' would bring progress, democracy and equality, which would ensure permanent peace.<sup>126</sup> Swanwick expanded on the 'force' debate. She argued that as child bearers, women actually possessed a positive physical force. Linking the national contribution of mothers to the question of international relations and citizenship, she dismissed the exclusion of women on the grounds of 'physical force'.<sup>127</sup> Members of WIL therefore contributed to an ongoing dialogue between suffragists and anti-suffragists on the 'Woman Question' – especially women's maternal roles, their contribution to society and female citizenship.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>123</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1916), p. 4.

<sup>124</sup> Brian Harrison, *Separate Spheres, The Opposition to Women's Suffrage in Britain* (London: Croom Helm, 1978); Melanie Faraunt, 'Women Resisting the Vote: A Case of Anti-Feminism?', *Women's History Review*, 12:4 (2003), pp. 605–21.

<sup>125</sup> Swanwick, *Women and War*, p. 5.

<sup>126</sup> Royden, *War and the Woman's Movement*.

<sup>127</sup> Swanwick, *Women and War*, p. 4.

<sup>128</sup> Julia Bush, *Women Against the Vote: Female Anti-Suffragism in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); the suffrage movement contributed to a shift in perceptions of women, see Maroula Joannou

WIL's feminism subverted notions of citizenship based on military service. The association justified both their abhorrence of war and demands for equality by using women's position as mothers and non-combatants, which historians of the British suffrage movement have overlooked.<sup>129</sup> Vellacott characterises the foundation of WIL as a break from the mainstream suffrage movement. Yet, she disregards ongoing co-operation between WIL and the 'patriotic' women's movement.<sup>130</sup> WIL concerned 'itself from the first with things appertaining to the full, free, citizenship of women'.<sup>131</sup> Notably, in Manchester, WIL worked closely with suffrage organisations during the war. WIL members joined a suffrage deputation to David Lloyd George in March 1917.<sup>132</sup> Unlike the NUWSS, WIL supported full adult suffrage, working with the National Council for Adult Suffrage and the National Federation of Women Workers towards this end.<sup>133</sup> Yet, WIL delegates signed the NUWSS resolution in support of the 1917 suffrage bill to secure limited female suffrage, hoping that it would mark a step towards full suffrage in the near future.<sup>134</sup> Chapter Two will show that WIL worked with women's organisations in the equal franchise campaign. Moreover, existing literature has constructed a false dichotomy between 'patriot' and 'pacifist' women.<sup>135</sup> Like the so-called 'patriots', WIL used the language of service to underscore the contribution that women could make to national and international politics.

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and June Purvis, *The Women's Suffrage Movement, New Feminist Perspectives* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>129</sup> Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement*, p. 10.

<sup>130</sup> Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*.

<sup>131</sup> WIL, 'Manifesto of Women's International League of Great Britain', *Monthly News Sheet*, (October 1915), Appendix IV, p. 20.

<sup>132</sup> Women's International League, *Special Conference of Representatives of Woman Suffrage Associations in Manchester, 24 November 1915*, Manchester Branch Minute Book, 1915–1919. BLPES, WILPF/BRAN/1; see also Ronan, 'Fractured, Fragile, Creative'. The 1917 suffrage deputation included Charlotte Despard and Mary Macarthur, members of WIL's Executive Committee. Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Order of Deputation* (March 1917). TWL@LSE, 6B/106/7/MGF/90A/WWI.

<sup>133</sup> WIL, 'Votes for All: Great Mass Meeting in February', *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1917), p. 3.

<sup>134</sup> WIL, 'Electoral Reform', *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1917), p. 2

<sup>135</sup> Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*.

## *Patriotism and internationalism*

In November 1914, Sheepshanks penned an article titled 'Patriotism or Internationalism'. She condemned the false patriotism of the Great Powers, which had led to 'national pride at the expense of humanity' through their quest for domination by force.<sup>136</sup> She questioned, 'what is left of the internationalism which met in congresses, socialist, feminist, pacifist, and boasted of the coming era of peace and amity?'. Thus, she asserted a unique role for women, who 'must not only use their hands to bind up, they must use their brains to understand the causes of the European frenzy, and their lives must be devoted to putting a stop forever to such wickedness'.<sup>137</sup> Similarly, the women at The Hague believed it was their duty to protect society from the destruction of war. Belva Lockwood, an American delegate to The Hague, summed up this sense of obligation, stating that 'evidently the time has come when the women of the world must leave their knitting and combine to serve the civilization of the human race'.<sup>138</sup>

Public representations represented pacifism as unpatriotic. The press criticised the women's congress: the *Daily Mail* dismissed it as a 'feminine farce'; the *Standard* claimed the 'women peace fanatics are becoming a nuisance and a menace'; and the *Daily Sketch* produced a cartoon titled 'Peace, where there is no Peace', which suggested that women were incapable of civilised debate.<sup>139</sup> A writer for the *Englishwoman* deemed the meeting a 'futile enterprise, doomed by the inauspicious moment of its inception to insignificance and failure'.<sup>140</sup> Some even considered the British delegates to be traitors. The *Daily*

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<sup>136</sup> Mary Sheepshanks, 'Patriotism or Internationalism', *Jus Suffragii* (November 1914).

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>138</sup> Belva Lockwood, 'Greetings to the Congress', *Bericht-Rapport-Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>139</sup> *Daily Mail*, 19 April 1915; 'Peace Fanatics', *Standard*, 15 April 1915; 'Peace, Where There is No Peace', *Daily Sketch*, 23 April 1915; in addition, the *Sunday Pictorial* dismissed the British delegation as 'Folly in Petticoats', *Sunday Pictorial*, 11 April 1915. John Rylands Library, IWSA/3/106.

<sup>140</sup> 'Echoes', *The Englishwoman* (April 1915). John Rylands Library, IWSA/3/106.

*Graphic* described the gathering as the ‘German peace congress’ to evoke an anti-German reaction towards the efforts of these women.<sup>141</sup>

As has been noted, many suffragists and suffragettes supported the national war effort. Emmeline and Christabel Pankhurst took a particularly patriotic stance. The *Suffragette* was renamed *Britannia* and they organised recruitment drives for the munitions factories.<sup>142</sup> Stating ‘we think that, as militant women, we may perhaps be able to do something to rouse the spirit of militancy in men’, the Pankhursts linked their suffrage militancy to support for military service.<sup>143</sup> In comparison, Fawcett emphasised women’s contribution to the war effort, claiming that ‘no nation is sustained in peace or war by the work of one sex only, but by the work of both combined. But this which we always perceived has come to many as a revelation made clear by the great searchlights of war.’<sup>144</sup>

Similarly, European suffragists took up war work. The German Bund Deutscher Frauenvereine (Union of German Women’s Organisations) co-ordinated women’s wartime work through the National Women’s Service. In occupied Belgium, the suffrage movement set up a Belgian Women’s Patriotic Union to organise women’s work. The Union declared that their support for the armed forces ‘knew no bounds’.<sup>145</sup> In France, the Conseil National des Femmes (National Council of Women) and the Union Françaises pour la Suffrage des Femmes (French Union for Women’s Suffrage) organised relief work.<sup>146</sup> Much like Fawcett, French suffragist Marguerite de Witt Schlumberger believed that women’s loyalty to the war effort would legitimise their claims to citizenship. In a letter to *Jus Suffragii*, she

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<sup>141</sup> *The Daily Graphic*, 23 April 1915. John Rylands Library, IWSA/3/106.

<sup>142</sup> Smith, *Suffrage Discourse*, p. 28; Angela Smith, ‘The Pankhursts and the War: Suffrage Magazines and First World War Propaganda’, *Women’s History Review*, 12:1 (2003), pp. 103–18.

<sup>143</sup> Emmeline Pankhurst, *Speech at the London Opera House*, 8 September 1914. TWL@ LSE, 7EIJ/4.

<sup>144</sup> Millicent Garrett Fawcett, *Order of Deputation* (March 1917). TWL@LSE, 6B/106/7/MGF/90A/WWI.

<sup>145</sup> ‘Belgian Women’s Patriotic Union’, *Jus Suffragii*, (March 1915), p. 247.

<sup>146</sup> Ingrid Sharp, ‘Overcoming Inner Division: Post-Suffrage Strategies in the Organised German Women’s Movement’, *Women’s History Review*, 23:3 (2014), p. 350; Sandi E. Cooper, ‘French Feminists and Pacifism, 1889–1914: The Evolution of New Visions’, *Peace & Change*, 36:1 (2011), pp. 5–7; Annika Wilmers, ‘Pacifism, Nationalism and Internationalism in the French and German Women’s Movement during the First World War’, *Minerva Journal of Women and War*, 1:1 (2007), p. 74.



wrote ‘as for us Frenchwomen, let us show by our calm and courageous attitude, by our devoted hearts and hands, and by our intelligent action, that we are worthy to help to direct our country since we are capable of serving it’.<sup>147</sup> For many suffragists, support for the national war effort was a pragmatic approach on the outbreak of war at the highpoint of their suffrage campaigns.<sup>148</sup>

For women in the belligerent nations, it was also a matter of timing. During an unprecedented war, it seemed inappropriate to demand domestic political rights. A ‘this is not the time to talk of peace’ attitude prevailed in the warring countries.<sup>149</sup> Annie Kenney, a suffragette close to the Pankhurst family, distanced herself from the aims of the 1915 congress, stating ‘if they want to talk about peace, let them go to Berlin and talk to the Kaiser’.<sup>150</sup> Nonetheless, some ‘patriotic’ women acknowledged the long-term aims of the women’s peace congress, but felt – as residents of belligerent countries – unable to commit to pacifism during war. For example, German IWSA member, Marie Stritt wrote to fellow suffragists, claiming that

Like you, we believe in women’s mission in the great work of peace that must redeem the world. But we cannot share your hope that common action for peace by women of belligerent and neutral countries could *at this moment* be successful in preventing or even shortening the horror by an hour.<sup>151</sup>

Evidently, it was difficult for women from the warring nations to oppose war. For many, national interests superseded transnational feminist-pacifist connections. Belgian feminists were unwilling to participate in the women’s peace organisation until Germany recognised its guilt and remorse.<sup>152</sup> Opposition to war prompted questions about national identity.

Pacifists, especially Conscientious Objectors (COs), were ostracised for their subversive

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<sup>147</sup> Marguerite de Witt Schlumberger, ‘French Suffragists and the War’, *Jus Suffragii*, (September 1914).

<sup>148</sup> Smith, *Suffrage Discourse in Britain*, p. 3.

<sup>149</sup> *Sunday Pictorial*, 11 April 1915. John Rylands Library, IWSA/3/106.

<sup>150</sup> ‘Women Pacifists Disowned’, *Daily Mail*, 15 April 1915, p. 3.

<sup>151</sup> Marie Stritt, ‘Germany’, *Jus Suffragii*, (March 1915).

<sup>152</sup> Laqua, *The Age of Internationalism*, p. 129.

behaviour. COs were considered unpatriotic and weak. Refusing to serve raised questions about one's masculinity and national loyalty.<sup>153</sup> In addition, the repression of civil liberties – such as the DORA – rendered peace activism difficult.<sup>154</sup> For instance, attempts by the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils (WSC) to organise anti-war, pro-Russian meetings were thwarted by the Special Branch of the Police Force. In Newcastle, WIL's branch chair, Ethel Williams organised a meeting of the WSC in July 1917. However, officials refused her use of the Town Hall. The meeting was infiltrated by servicemen who lobbed charges of 'traitors' at the organisers.<sup>155</sup>

Whether or not women's patriotism did lead to the extension of the franchise in 1918, it is clear that 'patriotic' suffragists described their wartime work in terms of national service, whilst challenging gender norms by participating in 'masculine' work.<sup>156</sup> This, however, has led to an assumption that pacifist women were therefore unpatriotic. Much of the literature on female service during the war seems to confirm contemporary assumptions that pacifism and patriotism were mutually exclusive.<sup>157</sup> Yet, members of WILPF did not consider their commitment to peace to be unpatriotic.<sup>158</sup> Clara Ragaz, the Swiss organiser of the 1919 congress, linked women's peace activism to service and duty, asserting that 'the day will come – for many it is already here – when it will be recognized that the very ones who seemed to betray their country have served it most faithfully'.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> Meyer, *Men of War*, p. 2.

<sup>154</sup> Grayzel, *Women's Identities at War*, p. 165.

<sup>155</sup> 'A Futile Meeting at Newcastle', *The Yorkshire Post*, 30 July 1917, p. 7.

<sup>156</sup> Gail Braybon, *Women Workers in the First World War* (Oxon: Routledge, 2013); Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers of World War I* (London: I.B Tauris, 2000); Lucy Noakes, *Women in the British Army: War and the Gentle Sex, 1907–1948* (Oxon: Routledge, 2006); Krisztina Robert, "'All That Is Best of the Modern Woman'": Representations of Female Military Auxiliaries in British Popular Culture, 1914–1919', in Meyer ed., *British Popular Culture and the First World War* (Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008).

<sup>157</sup> Vellacott, *Patriots, Pacifists and the Vote*; Paul Ward, "'Women of Britain Say Go': Women's Patriotism in the First World War', *Twentieth Century British History*, 12:1 (2001), pp. 23–45.

<sup>158</sup> Sandi E. Cooper, 'European Peace Advocates and the Great War: Prevention, Protest, Resignation and Resistance', *Peace and Change*, 40:2 (2015), p. 221.

<sup>159</sup> Clara Ragaz, 'Address of Welcome', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

Inspired by their commitment to internationalism, feminist pacifists believed their service extended beyond national borders. For instance, Hobhouse commented that

the women of the Hague Congress advance a step further and think for the whole world; their aim being no less than a World in Permanent Peace founded on the new order of a complete and dual citizenship – women with men – their field, the nation and the world.<sup>160</sup>

As this statement suggests, WIL members considered their anti-militarism and internationalism to be patriotic. Swanwick claimed that ‘it is not necessary for a man to hate other countries because he loves his own’, questioning jingoistic, anti-German patriotism.<sup>161</sup> Similarly, Jane Addams criticised the ‘totally unnecessary conflict between the great issues of internationalism and of patriotism’, arguing that ‘these two great affection should never have been set against the other’.<sup>162</sup> Nonetheless, she acknowledged the difficulties of maintaining a patriotic internationalist position during wartime. Thus, Addams empathised with internationalists subsumed by the nationalist war effort, describing war as the ‘supreme test of woman’s conscience’.<sup>163</sup>

Some members of WIL participated in the provision of relief to war victims. For these women, their pacifism, feminism, internationalism and philanthropy stemmed from ‘their lived-out commitment to our common humanity’.<sup>164</sup> For example, Courtney volunteered with the Serbian Relief Fund in Salonika and Corsica; Macmillan organised the delivery of food to occupied Belgium; and Lady Courtney worked with German

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<sup>160</sup> Hobhouse, ‘Foreword’, *Bericht–Rapport–Report*. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>161</sup> Swanwick, *Women and War*, p. 9.

<sup>162</sup> Jane Addams, ‘Presidential Address’, *Bericht–Rapport–Report*. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1; Sherry R. Shepler & Anne F. Mattina, ‘Paying the Price for Pacifism: The Press’s Rhetorical Shift from “Saint Jane” to “The Most Dangerous Woman in America”’, *Feminist Formations*, 24:1 (2012), 154–71.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Sybil Oldfield, *Women Humanitarians, A Biographical Dictionary of British Women Active between 1900 and 1950* (New York: Continuum, 2001), p. xi.

civilians in Britain and visited German prisoners.<sup>165</sup> Sylvia Pankhurst – who, unlike her mother and sister, opposed the war – worked on the home front in the East End of London, where she founded a milk distribution centre, a cost price restaurant, a nursery and a co-operative toy factory. Notably, she transformed the Gumakers’ Arms into the Mothers’ Arms – a mother and baby clinic. She used maternalism as a tool, claiming that ‘a conservative position is thus transformed into political challenge’.<sup>166</sup> However, some feminist-pacifists thought that relief work would prolong war. For Swanwick, it was a feminist issue: she argued that such work surrendered ‘to the age-old notion that women had no concern in public life except to wipe up the mess made by men’.<sup>167</sup> She contended that the most effective method to secure peace was educational and political work to transform public opinion. Other WIL members participated in ‘relief’ work by providing support for Conscientious Objectors. WIL co-operated closely with the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF).<sup>168</sup> Marshall drew on the popular discourse of service to the family and nation, arguing that it was the duty of women to ensure that ‘the sacrifices our men’ – perhaps, both servicemen and COs– ‘are making shall not have been made in vain’.<sup>169</sup>

Despite their divergent positions on the effect of relief work, WIL employed the language of service and patriotism in connection to its pacifism. Sandi Cooper usefully uses the phrase ‘patriotic pacifism’ to describe nineteenth-century peace movement, due to its links to nation-building, which can be applied to WIL’s attitudes during the Great

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<sup>165</sup> See entries on Kathleen Courtney, Chrystal Macmillan and Lady Courtney of Penwith in Oldfield, *Women Humanitarians*.

<sup>166</sup> E. Sylvia Pankhurst, *The Home Front, A Mirror to Life in England during the First World War* (London: Century Hutchinson Ltd., 1932), p. 155.

<sup>167</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 315.

<sup>168</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain, 1914–1945*, p. 32; Fenner Brockway, *Inside the Left: Thirty Years of Platform, Press, Prison and Parliament* (Leicester: The Blackfriars Press, 1947), p. 68; Brock and Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century*, p. 22.

<sup>169</sup> Marshall, *Women and War*. The Australian branch of WILPF, known as the Sisterhood of Peace and the Women’s Peace Army campaigned against the introduction of conscription, WILPF, *Internationaal* (August–Sept.–Oct.1918), pp. 1–3; Joy Damousi, ‘Socialist Women and Gendered Space: The Anti-Conscription and Anti-War Campaigns 1914–1918’, *Labour History*, 60 (1991), pp.1–15.

War.<sup>170</sup> Delegates at the 1915 congress ‘had been imbued with an intense patriotism ... inspired with that heroism of gentleness which longs for the service of the higher ideals without jeopardizing true national instincts’.<sup>171</sup> ‘Patriotic pacifism’ was the basis of WIL. For its members, national interests complemented their international aspirations. Furthermore, they devised a role for women, as protectors of their nation and the wider world from the destruction of war. Simultaneously adhering to and challenging traditional gender roles, these feminist-pacifists advocated that women should take an active role in international politics and peace making. It is important to consider WIL’s early campaigns during the Great War, which display its members’ convictions regarding peace, women’s rights and internationalism.

### ***Early WIL campaigns***

As an organisation formed around the twin goals of women’s rights and peace, WIL campaigned to bring a cessation of hostilities throughout the war years. In Britain, the issue of conscription was pertinent for the peace movement.<sup>172</sup> As debates in House of Commons took place, WIL protested against the introduction of conscription. The association asserted that conscription enthroned militarism above democracy and posed a threat to civil liberties.<sup>173</sup> In December 1915, the association held a mass meeting to present ‘the women’s case against conscription’.<sup>174</sup> After 1916, WIL called on the government to repeal the Military Services Act.<sup>175</sup> In addition, WIL supported the No Conscription Fellowship (NCF), founded in opposition to military conscription. By 1916, Catherine Marshall was effectively leading the NCF as its male leaders were imprisoned for resisting the draft.<sup>176</sup> In

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<sup>170</sup> Cooper, *Patriotic Pacifism*.

<sup>171</sup> WIL, *Towards Permanent Peace*, p. 24. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>172</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, p. 37.

<sup>173</sup> WIL, ‘News from Headquarters’, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1916), p. 1.

<sup>174</sup> WIL, *Meeting of Women* (1915). TWL@LSE, 2LSW/E/13/22.

<sup>175</sup> Military Service (No.2) Bill, HC Deb 06 January 1916, vol. 77, cc.113–256; WIL, ‘Conscription’, *Monthly News Sheet* (April 1916), p. 1.

<sup>176</sup> WIL, ‘News from Headquarters’, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1916), p. 1; Peter Brock and Nigel Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Toronto University, 1999), p. 25.

May 1917, NCF's President, Clifford Allen – who had already served two sentences of hard labour for resisting conscription – stood before the Court Martial. WIL campaigned to highlight the plight of Allen and other Objectors.<sup>177</sup> Local WIL branches worked within a network of anti-war groups including NCF, No-Conscription Fellowship Maintenance Committees, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, the Union of Democratic Control and the Independent Labour Party to support the dependents of COs.<sup>178</sup>

Anti-war networks in Glasgow facilitated the creation of the Women's Peace Crusade in June 1916 in response to the conscription crisis. The Crusade spread across Britain during 1916 and 1917. In June 1916, Helen Crawford – the Honorary Secretary of Glasgow WIL and a former militant suffragette – organised an anti-war conference. Delegates at the meetings voiced objections to the prolongation of the war and called on women to exert their special influence as mothers to counteract 'the growing militarism amongst the young'.<sup>179</sup> Following this conference, women organised open-air meetings twice an evening for a fortnight in Glasgow, culminating in a mass demonstration on Glasgow Green, 23 July. A range of women's organisations were represented at the demonstration, including WIL, the Women's Labour League, the Socialist Teacher's Federation and women of the Independent Labour Party. The main aims of the Crusade were 'Peace by Negotiation and Equal Suffrage'.<sup>180</sup> Building on the success of the women's rent strike alongside the increased war weariness and frustration with conscription, the Crusade grew out of the grass roots socialist movement in Clydeside. The campaign was a transformative experience for women who were previously not involved

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<sup>177</sup> Clifford Allen, *Why I Still Resist*, (1917). WILPF, II, Reel 35.

<sup>178</sup> Alison Ronan, 'The Manchester No-Conscription Fellowship Maintenance Committee 1916–1918: Quakers and Socialists Creating a Geographical and Symbolic Site of Resistance', *NW Labour History Journal*, 39 (2014/15), p. 41.

<sup>179</sup> WIL, 'Women's Peace Crusade in Glasgow', *Monthly News Sheet* (July 1916), p. 4.

<sup>180</sup> WIL, 'Our Scottish and Northern Campaign', *Monthly News Sheet* (September 1916), p. 3.

with organised women's politics.<sup>181</sup> Local crusades were organised by local WIL branches in co-operation with the Women's Labour League and Independent Labour Party women, particularly in industrial cities such as Liverpool, Newcastle, Manchester and Birmingham.<sup>182</sup>

In 1917, a central Peace Crusade Bureau was founded in London to issue information and co-ordinate the nation-wide campaign. Ethel Snowden, alongside other members of WIL's Executive Committee – including Helen Crawford, Charlotte Despard, Katharine Bruce Glasier and Margaret Bondfield – managed the Bureau.<sup>183</sup> The Crusade indicates the links between feminist-pacifists and socialist anti-war women. Snowden, Crawford, Despard, Glasier and Bondfield were also active in labour and socialist organisations. Moreover, the Crusade mobilised working women in industrial centres.<sup>184</sup> Whilst WIL remained a predominantly middle-class association, the Crusade operated through the networks of socialist and labour grass-roots activism and spoke to women in terms of both their gender and class in relation to war and peace.<sup>185</sup>

The Russian Revolution of February 1917 provided a vital boost for the anti-war movement. Russia's subsequent withdrawal from the Great War encouraged activists that 'the pacific spirit of democracy' would prevail.<sup>186</sup> The British government selected Emmeline Pankhurst as a representative of the women's movement to travel to Russia. WIL members were outraged at this selection, arguing that 'anyone who has ever seen Mrs. Pankhurst speak knows that she always usurps a representative position'.<sup>187</sup> WIL co-

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<sup>181</sup> Hunt, 'Rethinking Activism', p. 220.

<sup>182</sup> WIL, 'Women's Peace Crusade', *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1917), p. 4.

<sup>183</sup> WIL, 'London Peace Crusade Bureau', *Monthly News Sheet* (September 1917), p. 6; Ethel Snowden, *Central Information Bureau Letter*, 12 July 1918. Hull University Archives, UDDC/4/29.

<sup>184</sup> Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women*, p. 186.

<sup>185</sup> Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common*, p. 129.

<sup>186</sup> WIL, 'Our Business', *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1917), p. 1; Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*, p. 155.

<sup>187</sup> WIL, 'A Women's Delegation to Russia', *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1917), p. 2.

operated with other women's organisations to put together an alternative delegation, which included Margaret Bondfield, Charlotte Despard, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence and Ethel Snowden. However, the government refused to grant passports to the group.<sup>188</sup> Although unsuccessful, the WIL contingent provides another example of co-operation between feminist-pacifists and socialist women. WIL sent delegates to the Leeds Convention held on 3 June 1917. Organised by the Independent Labour Party and the British Socialist Party, the Convention celebrated the February Revolution in Russia, called for an end to war and set up local Workers' and Soldiers' Councils.<sup>189</sup> WIL was able to work with socialist and labour anti-war organisations due to a shared interest in bringing an end to war and a commitment to internationalism.<sup>190</sup>

Nonetheless, tensions arose between WIL and socialist anti-militarists. While the international WILPF expressed its sympathy with workers' revolutionary movements, the organisation condemned the use of violence – preferring 'to counsel against violence, and above all to prepare the minds of the wealthy and possessing classes, to persuade them to yield their special privileges without struggle'.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, WIL warned its members that male dominated labour and socialist movement – in particular the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils – could dominate women's voices, stating that 'our task is to make men feel that women's power is no less'.<sup>192</sup> Thus, the association maintained its position as a feminist peace organisation. In a letter to E.D. Morel – the leader of the anti-militarist UDC – Swanwick lamented the segregation between the women and men in the peace movement. She believed that men and women had much to learn from one another and would be more

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<sup>188</sup> Ibid.

<sup>189</sup> Stephen White, 'Soviets in Britain: The Leeds Convention of 1917', *International Review of Social History*, 19:2 (1974), pp. 165–93.

<sup>190</sup> Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women*, p. 167.

<sup>191</sup> WILPF, "Amendment to Resolution A VIII Relation of Pacifists to Revolutionary Movements", *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>192</sup> WIL, 'Workers' and Soldiers' Council', *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1917), p. 4.



effective when campaigning side-by-side.<sup>193</sup> Nevertheless, she articulated the necessity for a separate women's peace organisation, arguing that

All of us women within the W.I.L. probably belong to other organisations in which we work in closest comradeship with men, learn from them and teach them. But in some ways and at some times we can go faster and further in a regiment of women.<sup>194</sup>

In Swanwick's work, the subjection of women as well as the links between feminism and pacifism hence justified WIL's existence as an independent organisation. At the international level, WILPF agreed that 'women have a very important contribution to make to life', particularly in the establishment of peace and international law.<sup>195</sup>

Significantly, WIL was part of the international women's movement through its relationship to WILPF, which arguably constituted the most transnational of the women's organisations in the early twentieth century.<sup>196</sup> The ICW and IWSA were amalgamations of existing national women's societies. The NUWSS was the British national section of the IWSA. However, WILPF worked to set up its own national sections following its first congress in 1915.<sup>197</sup> As Laura Beers has pointed out, the members of ICW and IWSA were merely 'internationalists by association'.<sup>198</sup> By contrast, for both WILPF and its British section, internationalism was a core principle. Members of WILPF's International Executive Committee sat as individuals rather than as representatives of their national sections and the organisation was more than a federation of existing national women's

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<sup>193</sup> Helena M. Swanwick to E.D. Morel, 21 September 1914. BLPES, MOREL/F6/2.

<sup>194</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, 'A Regiment of Women', *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1920), p. 2.

<sup>195</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, 'Evening Speech', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>196</sup> Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 360.

<sup>197</sup> WPP, *Report of the International Congress of Women* (USA: Roy G. Harper, 1915), p. 14. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16. The relationship between national sections and the international organisation is explored in detail in Chapter Four.

<sup>198</sup> Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism between the Wars', p. 208.

societies.<sup>199</sup> WIL claimed that ‘it is this international character which has distinguished it from the first’.<sup>200</sup>

### **The structure and workings of WIL**

As mentioned previously, WIL became one of WILPF’s most effective national sections. It worked in Britain for the aims of WILPF. This section will consider the structure and workings of WIL to situate the association in the history of the national and international women’s movement.

#### ***The Executive Committee***

WIL established its London headquarters in 1915 and women from a range of activist backgrounds formed the first Executive Committee. Many of its leading members were suffragists, who had resigned their posts in the NUWSS in order to support the pacifist congress. Helena Swanwick, Kathleen Courtney, Alice Clark, Isabella Ford, Margaret Ashton, Emily Leaf, Catherine Marshall and Maude Royden were amongst those who tendered their resignations and went on to serve on WIL’s first Executive Committee. In her resignation letter, Courtney argued that her support for peace was ‘in accordance with the principles underlying the suffrage movement’.<sup>201</sup> Not all anti-war suffragists resigned from the NUWSS. Macmillan opted to remain a member of the Union to maintain an anti-war presence on the committee. This significant group of suffragists brought their experience of suffrage organising to WIL and the association remained committed to the campaign for women’s enfranchisement throughout the war and interwar years.<sup>202</sup>

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<sup>199</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 32.

<sup>200</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1920), p. 1.

<sup>201</sup> Kathleen D’Olier Courtney, ‘Resignation Letter to the NUWSS’, 9 March 1915. BLPES, WILPF/4/1.

<sup>202</sup> Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*, p. 178.

Former militant suffragettes also joined WIL's first Executive Committee, including Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, Sylvia Pankhurst and Charlotte Despard.<sup>203</sup> Moreover, many of WIL's first committee came from labour and socialist backgrounds, including Margaret Bondfield, Ethel Snowden and Katharine Bruce Glasier. WIL's commitment to women's rights, peace and internationalism – alongside its broader interests in social justice, humanitarianism and democracy – brought the association into close contact with a range of activists. WIL was, therefore, part of a broader arena of British and international activism, which will be explored further in Chapter Five.

Twenty-five women constituted WIL's first Executive Committee at its initial Council meeting. Within the Executive Committee, WIL members appointed a President, Chair, Vice-Chairs, Treasurers and Secretaries at annual Council meetings. Terms on the Executive Committee lasted a full year but women were eligible for re-election without nomination. Thus, members of the committee served until they resigned – usually due to other commitments or ill health. For example, Marshall submitted her resignation due to her deteriorating health in November 1929.<sup>204</sup> Many leading WIL members served on the committee for significant periods. For example, Courtney was a member of the initial British Committee of the International Women's Congress and the first Executive Committee of WIL. She served as Vice Chair of the association until 1923, when she was elected Chair. In 1932, Courtney succeeded Swanwick to become WIL's President. Despite resigning from her post in 1934, she continued to be involved with WIL, but focussed her energies on her work with the League of Nations Union during the remainder of the interwar period.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>203</sup> These individuals had split from the Pankhurst-led Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) due to disputes over tactics and a clash of personalities before 1914.

<sup>204</sup> WIL, Executive Committee Meeting, Minutes (12 November 1929). WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>205</sup> See appendix for record of WIL's Executive Committee.

The Executive Committee met monthly in London. Not all twenty-five members were always present and visitors occasionally attended meetings. For instance, Madeleine Doty and Thora Daugaard – representing the International Executive Committee and the Danish section of WILPF, respectively – attended the meetings held on 12 November 1929. A month later, Camille Drevet attended the committee meeting as a representative of both WILPF's International Executive Committee and the French section.<sup>206</sup> These visits provided a direct link between WIL's Executive Committee and the wider WILPF, including its International Executive and other national sections of the association. Recognising the value of these international links, WIL encouraged and arranged visits from members of other WILPF sections.<sup>207</sup>

The Committee's role was to discuss and organise events and meetings; approve resolutions; make travel plans for international congresses; and to hear from the work of WIL's committees. For example, at the July 1928 meeting, members of the committee discussed plans for a meeting about the League of Nations' Tenth Assembly, as well as progress of the Women's Peace Crusade. At this meeting, the Committee discussed organisational business such as the appointment of British speakers for WILPF's conference in Prague the following year; plans for the WILPF International Summer School; funds to facilitate the travel of European speakers to WIL meetings; and the nomination of Edith Pye and Cicely Corbett Fisher as consultative members to WILPF's Executive Committee.<sup>208</sup> At these meetings, the Executive Committee also formulated and discussed WIL resolutions on issues relating to international relations, such as the association's support for the evacuation of the Rhineland.<sup>209</sup>

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<sup>206</sup> WIL, Executive Committee Meeting, Minutes (10 December 1929). WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.

<sup>208</sup> WIL, Executive Committee Meeting, Minutes (9 July 1928). WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>209</sup> Ibid.

## ***Local branches***

As mentioned, unlike other international women's organisations, WILPF was more than a federation of national associations.<sup>210</sup> Even so, WILPF accommodated national, regional and local interests. By May 1916, WIL had local branches in twenty-one locations, including sections in Birmingham, Bournemouth, Bristol, Darlington, Edinburgh, Glasgow, Leeds, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, Northampton and South Wales.<sup>211</sup> The association expanded during the war: by the end of 1916, the number of WIL branches had risen to thirty-seven.<sup>212</sup> In 1919, WIL claimed to have 2,800 members affiliated to its local branches, plus an additional 850 'central members'.<sup>213</sup> This Central Branch was based at WIL's headquarters on Little College Street in Westminster, moving to Bedford Row in 1917 and later Gower Street. Members from across the country joined Central Branch, particularly from areas where local branches did not exist.<sup>214</sup> By 1937, the British section had twenty-five local branches across England and Scotland, with a further eleven branches in North Wales.<sup>215</sup>

The size and scope of local branches varied. For instance, branches in Glasgow and Manchester were substantial, whereas other branches were much smaller in terms of membership, such as those in Welwyn Garden City and Tunbridge Wells. Some of the smallest branches folded during the interwar period, including those at Barnet and Edgbaston. In London, smaller local branches merged into the 'S.E. London' and 'S.W.

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<sup>210</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 32.

<sup>211</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1916), p. 2.

<sup>212</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1916), p. 4.

<sup>213</sup> WIL, 'British Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Report 1919 - 1921', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich* (1921), p. 35. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>214</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (April 1916), p. 2.

<sup>215</sup> WIL, *Twenty-Second Annual Report, March 1937–March 1938* (London: International House, 1938), p. 11. WILPF MF, III, Reel 71.

London' divisions during the 1930s.<sup>216</sup> The records of local WIL branches shed light on the grassroots activities of the transnational women's peace organisation. For instance, the 1925 annual report of the Bristol and District branch demonstrates the local pursuits of WIL. Like the national section, this branch was steered by a branch President, a number of Vice Presidents and an Executive Committee, elected at the branch annual meeting. During 1925, Bristol WIL held a number of public lectures on 'race and nationality' and 'preliminaries to world peace'.<sup>217</sup> Whilst not one of the largest WIL branches, Bristol reported that, it had seventy members subscribed in 1925.<sup>218</sup> This local report also indicates links between WIL and branches of other associations – including the League of Nations Union, Mothers' Union, Young Women's Christian Association, women's sections of the Labour Party, and church groups – demonstrating that WIL was a member of a diverse network of activism at the local level.<sup>219</sup> The branch also highlighted its connection to the international level of WILPF, revealing the connection between the local and international. For example, one of the Bristol WIL members attended the WILPF Summer School in Thonon in France, where she recited English poetry as part of a celebration of different national cultures and customs.<sup>220</sup>

In contrast to Bristol, Manchester had one of the most active local sections of WIL, driven by its large membership. It had been one of the first local branches of the association formed at an inaugural meeting held on 20 October 1915 and it acquired offices on Princess Street soon after.<sup>221</sup> This branch operated within a vibrant network of anti-war

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<sup>216</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: International House, 1925); WIL, *Twenty-Second Annual Report, March 1937–March 1938* (London: International House, 1938), p. 11.

<sup>217</sup> WIL, *Ninth Annual Report of the Bristol and District Branch, For the Year, 1925* (1925), p. 3. WILPF, I, Reel 2.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 6–7.

<sup>219</sup> Chapter Five will consider WIL's links to other associations and social movements at the national level.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>221</sup> WIL, *Minutes of the Executive Committee, Manchester Branch Minute Book* (28 October 1915). BLPES, WILPF/BRAN/1; 'Women's International League: Manchester Branch', *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 October 1915, p. 15.

and socialist activism. Manchester had branches of various anti-war groups, such as the No Conscription Fellowship, Fellowship of Reconciliation and the Union of Democratic Control, as well as branches of the Independent Labour Party.<sup>222</sup> First chaired by Margaret Ashton – Manchester’s first woman city councillor – Manchester WIL appointed a committee including secretaries and a treasurer. The branch arranged regular meetings in the homes of its members, addressed by formative members of WIL, including Kathleen Courtney and Marion Ellis (later known as Lady Parmoor).<sup>223</sup> A month after its establishment, Manchester WIL boasted a membership of 229.<sup>224</sup> Its membership rose to approximately 700 by 1920.<sup>225</sup> The minutes of the Manchester branch also reveal co-operation between WIL and a range of women’s and suffrage associations active in the city, including the United Suffragists, Manchester Women’s Suffrage Societies, Friends’ Society for Women’s Suffrage, and the Women’s Labour League. The branch regularly held study circles and public lectures on the subject of women’s suffrage, peace and international affairs in Manchester and its suburbs. During February 1920, the subject of WIL-organised public meetings focused on ‘nationalisation of the mines’, ‘revolutionary movements in Europe’, ‘revision of the peace treaties’ and ‘new frontiers of Europe’. The Manchester branch also held ‘dinner-hour meetings’ outside workshops and factories, in an attempt to incorporate working women.<sup>226</sup>

At the local level, British branches had a level of autonomy so long as their activities coincided with the general aims of WILPF. At a special meeting of the Manchester Executive Committee, held on 17 November 1915, WIL President Helena

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<sup>222</sup> Alison Ronan, ‘Fractured, Fragile, Creative: A Brief Analysis of Wartime Friendships Between Provincial Women Anti-War Activists, 1914–1918’, *North West Labour History* (2011), pp. 21–30.

<sup>223</sup> WIL, Minutes of the Executive Committee, Manchester Branch Minute Book (28 October 1915). BLPES, WILPF/BRAN/1/1.

<sup>224</sup> WIL, Minutes of the Executive Committee, Manchester Branch Minute Book (17 November 1915). BLPES, WILPF/BRAN/1/1.

<sup>225</sup> WIL, National Report of British Section (c.1920), p. 2. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>226</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1920), p. 4.

Swanwick instructed the branch to ‘not wait for instructions from headquarters but that they would undertake any local work they might consider advisable’.<sup>227</sup> Yet, the independence of local branches often extended beyond branch activity. For instance, in May 1920, Manchester WIL held a joint demonstration with the Blackley Labour Party to protest the Polish intervention in Russia. As a result, the branch sent resolutions directly to the Prime Minister, Minister of War, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.<sup>228</sup> The branch suggested that branches of WIL should be able to take action ‘when crises arise (e.g. Russo-Polish War and Ireland) the whole weight of the League may be thrown in support of an agreed policy and lead given to the branches’.<sup>229</sup> Moreover, the attitudes of the Manchester branch at times diverged from the WIL line. For instance, in 1922 at WILPF’s ‘New Peace’ conference, the Manchester branch argued that the ‘London attitude’ on the issue of Soviet Russia’s appropriate role in the renegotiation of peace did not represent the entire national section.<sup>230</sup> The varied membership of WIL and its broad goals did result in differences along local, national and international lines. Yet, the plurality and flexibility of WILPF permitted a range of views to be heard.

During the Great War, most local branches focussed their activities on organising study circles and informal meetings to discuss the wider goals of WILPF. For instance, the Hereford branch studied Romain Rolland’s *Au-Dessus de la Mêlée*.<sup>231</sup> Furthermore, members distributed leaflets on peace by negotiation and opposition to conscription, as well as subscribing to the *Labour Leader* and *The Herald* ‘to guarantee the sale of pacifist newspapers at newspaper shops’.<sup>232</sup> As mentioned, WIL campaigned against the introduction of conscription and for women’s suffrage during the Great War. In

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<sup>227</sup> WIL, Minutes of the Executive Committee, Manchester Branch Minute Book (17 November 1915). BLPES, WILPF/BRAN/1/1.

<sup>228</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1920), p. 4.

<sup>229</sup> WIL, Minutes of the Manchester Branch (7 September 1920). BLPES, WILPF/BRAN/1/2.

<sup>230</sup> WIL, Minutes of the Manchester Branch (28 November 1922). BLPES, WILPF/BRAN/1/2.

<sup>231</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1916), p. 3.

<sup>232</sup> ‘Suggestions for Work from Chelsea’, *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1916), p. 4.



Manchester, WIL representatives sat on the local No-Conscription Committee.<sup>233</sup> In terms of women's suffrage, the branch took a leading role in the local campaign. Manchester WIL held a special conference of representatives of women's suffrage associations on 24 November 1915 to create pressure during parliamentary discussions over the amendment of voting qualifications.<sup>234</sup> As conveners of this conference, Manchester WIL was at the centre of the suffrage network in the North West of England. However, the Manchester branch was perhaps atypical of other local WIL branches. The scope of its membership and access to an activist network in the city facilitated its impressive wartime activism.

### ***Meetings***

Despite the difficulties of organising during wartime, the British WIL held regular meetings between 1915 and 1919. Representatives of WIL's local branches attended the association's annual General Council meetings, which determined WIL's agenda and policy. Each branch was entitled to send at least one representative, plus additional delegates for every further twenty-five members. Visitors were also welcome to attend.<sup>235</sup> From 26 to 27 October 1916, WIL's second such meeting took place in London. At this meeting, the association reaffirmed its support for peace by negotiation and backed President Wilson's commitment to mediation. WIL also produced resolutions on the democratic control of foreign policy; promoted education on international lines; and supported the rights of Conscientious Objectors. The association discussed proposals to subject women to inspection for venereal disease under the DORA; issues relating to old age pensions; the labour of women and children; nationality; and 'reiterated the demand for a Government measure this session granting equal adult suffrage'.<sup>236</sup> Louie Bennett of

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<sup>233</sup> WIL, Manchester Branch Minute Book, 25 January 1916. BLPES, WILPF/BRAN/1/1.

<sup>234</sup> WIL, Manchester Branch Minute Book, 24 November 1915. BLPES, WILPF/BRAN/1/1. See also, Gullace, *'The Blood of Our Sons'*, p. 8.

<sup>235</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (September 1917), p. 4.

<sup>236</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1916), pp. 1–3.

the Irishwomen's International League (IIL) also addressed the meeting, thanking WIL for its support during the 'Irish troubles' and suggested potential lines of co-operation between the IIL and WIL.<sup>237</sup> Council meetings provided an opportunity for the Executive Committee and representatives of local branches to meet, decide on policy, and discuss plans for meetings and events.

After the Great War, WIL continued to hold annual Council meetings in London every October. Delegates from local branches and occasional international visitors joined members of the national Executive Committee to discuss WIL's work, elect and appoint members of the Executive Committee and other sub-committees, and to discuss WILPF's international activities. For instance, Vida Goldstein and Mary McArthy of the Australian and New Zealand sections of WILPF attended the Council meeting of 1919 alongside representatives of nineteen local WIL branches.<sup>238</sup> Annual Council meetings followed a well-established format: the appointment of tellers, auditors, returning officers, and members of the Standing Orders Committee took place before the election of officers to the various WIL committees and any discussion on WIL business. Minutes of these annual Council meetings also demonstrate the continued process of negotiation and debate between members, local branches and the Executive Committee over the appropriate lines of work for the association. In 1919, representatives of the Manchester branch vehemently objected to a resolution that suggested WIL forgo its election work and policy. Margaret Ashton asserted that elections 'were one of the greatest opportunities of inculcating our doctrines'. She urged WIL to 'make M.P's realise that a feminist international point of view existed among their constituents'.<sup>239</sup> Ashton's statement was widely supported and

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<sup>237</sup> Ibid, p. 3.

<sup>238</sup> WIL, Annual Council Meeting Minutes (30—31 October 1919). WILPF MF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

election work was a primary feature of WIL's political work in Britain throughout the interwar period.

Annual Council meetings had an important function in permitting members of the British section to hear about the international work of WILPF and the travels of its members. For instance, in 1919 Catherine Marshall regaled accounts of her recent visits to Germany, Switzerland and France.<sup>240</sup> The Council also agreed on resolutions, stating the association's position on key issues, for use in lobbying both the British Government and the League of Nations. In addition to the international work of the association, delegates to the meetings considered local branch activity. A representative at the 1929 meeting reported that 'the vigour and sense of strength betokened in the discussions were very impressive'.<sup>241</sup> Annual Council meetings could provide a social opportunity for local branch representatives. For example, a conference for branch secretaries, held at Honorary Treasurer, Cicely Binyon's house in the British Museum followed the 1929 Council meeting.<sup>242</sup>

WIL's *Monthly News Sheet* published the agenda and reports of Council meetings, including results of elections to WIL committees and overviews of the discussions and resolutions passed. WIL also published an annual report, which summarised WIL's work, in addition to contributions from local branches as well as WILPF's international activity. As such, these publications included information on arrangements for international congresses and summer schools; reports from WIL's committees including those for education, publicity, finance and the Executive Committee; and a record of resolutions passed at annual Council meetings. For instance, the *Thirteenth Yearly Report* focused primarily on the association's election campaign in relation to equal franchise during the

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<sup>240</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>241</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (April 1929), p. 3.

<sup>242</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1929), p. 4.

1929 General Election. The summary also documented the principal work of WILPF's International Executive Committee, as well as the work of other WILPF sections. For example, WIL reported on the International Conference on Modern Methods of Warfare co-ordinated by the Swedish, French and German sections, held in Frankfurt in January 1929.<sup>243</sup> Annual reports also contained brief accounts of WIL's work in co-operation with other associations, including the League of Nations Union and the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship. WIL informed members about changes to office staff and key personnel, provided news from national headquarters, WIL's President and Treasurer, and updates on the association's finances.

In 1920, WIL decided to expand the work of its headquarters and establish an international institute in London to promote internationalism. Plans for the international centre, to be open to women and men alike, included space to host international visitors to allow 'British people anxious to keep in direct personal touch with foreigners and foreign affairs'.<sup>244</sup> In November 1921, WIL secured premises on Gower Street in central London for its 'International House', which bore many similarities to the purpose and function of WILPF's international headquarters – Maison Internationale – in Geneva. International House had a significant social function through its reading-room and space to host lectures and social events, which included dances, concerts and games evenings. The association hoped that International House would become a social centre of the organisation in the heart of Bloomsbury to host like-minded activists and students interested in international relations.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> WIL, *Thirteenth Yearly Report* (1929). WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>244</sup> K.E. Royds, Circular Letter, February/March 1921. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>245</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1921), pp. 1–2.

Membership to International House was open to all over the age of sixteen for a yearly fee of 5s.<sup>246</sup> WIL appealed to its members to staff the House, welcome foreign guests, set up and close the House after meetings, as well as operate the reading room, and tend to the garden. Volunteers were also required to arrange debates, lectures and study-circles.<sup>247</sup> The House hosted eminent speakers, including founding UDC member, Charles Roden Buxton and German feminist, Helene Stöcker in the summer of 1922. WIL also arranged social events, such as a regular continental market and music recitals, as part of the association's agenda to promote international cultures.<sup>248</sup> Nevertheless, the International House club struggled financially and WIL made frequent appeals for donations from its members to sustain its work.<sup>249</sup> In July 1924, WIL closed the club. The association kept the property and rented rooms out to other organisations to generate income.<sup>250</sup> WIL retained the ground floor room and office on Gower Street for its meetings and administrative work.<sup>251</sup>

### ***The finances of WIL***

Like International House, WIL experienced financial difficulties and some local branches folded after the initial enthusiasm following the inauguration of the British section. WIL, however, was not the only British association to experience such difficulties. The women's organisation noted that the UDC was also struggling to balance its books and attract members. WIL was aware of the 'increasing uncertainty about the future, high cost of living and actual poverty of our members' and that 'people of our way of thinking are more

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<sup>246</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1922), p. 3.

<sup>247</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1921), p. 3.

<sup>248</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1922), p. 4; WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1922), p. 4.

<sup>249</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1923), p. 4.

<sup>250</sup> WIL, *Thirteenth Yearly Report*, (1928), p. 16.

<sup>251</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report* (1924), p. 23. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

and more joining the Labour Party'.<sup>252</sup> The association reduced the size of its office staff due to its 'grave financial position'.<sup>253</sup> Nonetheless, WIL remained active throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Its Council resolved to focus the work of the British section on co-operation with educational bodies and labour associations to further international ideas; produce a series of histories; organise holiday schools, including an international summer school; and continue as the British section of WILPF to communicate with headquarters in Geneva.<sup>254</sup> Yet, international travel, which was an important part of WIL's internationalism, was costly. Members were encouraged to pay their own travel expenses if they were able to, or to consider donating funds towards the travel expenses of others. The Executive Committee also raised funds to assist delegates to travel to international congresses and meetings of the International Executive Committee.<sup>255</sup> Throughout the interwar period, WIL appealed to its members for donations and held fundraisers, including garden parties, theatrical performances, and fêtes.<sup>256</sup> Funds raised in 1924 permitted seven WIL delegates to attend the fourth international congress of WILPF, held in Washington D.C..<sup>257</sup> Notably, Lady Courtney donated £75.00 towards travel expenses, in addition to her subscription to the central branch. Elizabeth Cadbury also made an extra donation of £25.00 towards travel expenses in 1924.<sup>258</sup>

Nonetheless, not all WIL members were able to make such donations, nor were they expected to do so. The financial records of WIL's central branch indicate that

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<sup>252</sup> H.M. Swanwick, I. Cooper Willis & M. Dehn to Branch Secretaries, 13 September 1920. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>253</sup> H.M. Swanwick, I. Cooper Willis & M. Dehn to Branch Secretaries, 4 September 1920. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>254</sup> H.M. Swanwick, I. Cooper Willis & M. Dehn to Branch Secretaries, 13 September 1920. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>255</sup> K.E. Royds letter, 9 April 1921. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>256</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (1925). WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>257</sup> WIL, 'Statement of Receipts and Expenditure for the year ending 31 December 1924' *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (1925). WILPF MF, III, Reel 68; WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1924), p. 3.

<sup>258</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24–25.

members were able to pay different subscription rates according to their means. In order to join the branch, members were required to pay an annual subscription of at least one shilling. In 1924, only fifty-three out of the 708 members paid the minimum subscription, whereas most members opted to pay two shillings. Others paid significantly more in their subscription to the branch, including Emmeline and Frederick Pethick Lawrence – who paid £25.00 in 1924 – and Lady Parmoor – who paid £10.00 to the branch.<sup>259</sup> Local branches also donated different amounts to WIL. For instance, in 1924, Manchester WIL donated £27.00; the Glasgow and Leeds branches both donated £5.00; and Liverpool WIL contributed £1.00.<sup>260</sup> The record of receipts and expenditures of local branches for the year 1924–5 indicates the size and scope of WIL’s local sections. Manchester received over £528 and spent £495 over the year, whereas one of the smaller branches – Welwyn Garden City – brought in £7,13,5 and spent £5,8,4.<sup>261</sup> The records of subscriptions and donations to WIL indicates that the association could accommodate members from a variety of socio-economic backgrounds. Although leading members often donated large sums to the association, most members paid smaller subscriptions. It also indicates the size and scope of local branches.

Sybil Oldfield has analysed the composition of the British Committee of the International Women’s Congress – the precursor to WIL – concluding that only eight percent of those interested in travelling to the Hague Congress in 1915 were from working-class backgrounds. Yet, as she suggests, this does not indicate a lack of support for the aims of the congress amongst working-class women. For instance, the 1917 Women’s

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<sup>259</sup> WIL, ‘Statement of Receipts and Expenditure for the year ending 31 December 1924’, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (1925). WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>260</sup> WIL, ‘Statement of Receipts and Expenditure for the year ending 31 December 1924’, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (1925). WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>261</sup> WIL, ‘Branch Receipts and Expenditure’, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (1925), p. 33.

Peace Crusade garnered working class support in Glasgow and other industrial centres.<sup>262</sup>

Nonetheless, assessing the class make-up of WIL is complex. International women's associations, such as WILPF, are often assumed to be predominantly middle-class. Marie Sandell argues that shared middle-class backgrounds facilitated the creation of a sense of 'international sisterhood' amongst the women active in WILPF, the ICW and IWSA.<sup>263</sup>

Nonetheless, analysis of the national and local records of WIL reveals a more diverse composition. As the 1924 accounts show, membership to WIL could cost as little as one shilling. Moreover, WIL aimed to make international travel open to its members through its fundraising activities. Some significant members hailed from working-class

backgrounds. For instance, Ellen Wilkinson and her sister, Annie – secretary of the Manchester WIL – joined the British delegation at WILPF's Prague congress in 1929.<sup>264</sup>

Nonetheless, the majority of women who travelled to WILPF congresses were predominantly well-educated and middle-class. Although WIL's Executive Committee and core membership was overwhelmingly middle class, WIL's strength lay in its ability to work with a range of other associations with whom it shared key values and aims. For instance, British WIL worked closely with a number of labour movement, particularly the Women's Co-operative Guild, thus reaching out to activists and supporters beyond the middle and upper classes. This allowed the association to extend beyond its own membership to further its work for peace, women's rights and internationalism. WIL's local and national membership records shed new light on the make-up on international women's organisations. Operating in the context of mass enfranchisement – particularly from 1928 onwards – WIL, like the LNU, encouraged active citizenship or 'enlightened patriotism' through their educational and political campaigns to influence women across

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<sup>262</sup> Sybil Oldfield, 'England's Cassandras in World War One', in Sybil Oldfield ed., *This Working-Day World, Women's Lives and Culture(s) in Britain, 1914–1945* (London: Taylor & Francis Ltd., 1994), p. 89.

<sup>263</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 217.

<sup>264</sup> Laura Beers, *Red Ellen: The Life of Ellen Wilkinson, Socialist, Feminist, Internationalist* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 248.



the country.<sup>265</sup> One of the ways WIL was able to reach across the country was through the production of its *News Sheet* and other publications.

### ***Publications***

WIL aimed to ‘work for practical ends, and its methods will in no sense therefore be merely academic’, yet agreed that education and propaganda would be a ‘necessary accompaniment’ of its activity.<sup>266</sup> The association was strongly committed to its educational and political policy, aiming to ‘enlighten and to educate’ public opinion in favour of an immediate peace.<sup>267</sup> Members emphasised the need for educational campaigns to shape public opinion so that ‘thoughts and desires may be directed towards the ideal of constructive peace’.<sup>268</sup> During its early years, the association campaigned for a revision of the school curriculum, arguing that ‘the future of education lies in the hands of women could they but realise their power, and realise too, the fatal influence of the schoolmasters and historians of to-day’.<sup>269</sup> For instance, WIL focussed on the production of a bibliography for use in schools and propaganda ‘for the enlightenment of public opinion’.<sup>270</sup>

In connection to raising public awareness and education, the association concentrated on the role of the press in shaping public opinion. WIL urged for the creation of a journal to ‘put forward the ideals of the Women’s International Movement’ to ‘serve as a centre of activity, and a means of propaganda, encouragement, and inter-

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<sup>265</sup> Helen McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations: Democracy, Citizenship and Internationalism c.1918–45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011), p. 21; a range of women’s associations encouraged women to become active citizens following their enfranchisement, see Beaumont, ‘Citizens Not Feminists’, pp. 411–29.

<sup>266</sup> Account of the Women’s International League as constituted in London’, *News Sheet* 5, Appendix V (1915), p. 2. WILPF, VI, Reel 110.

<sup>267</sup> Helen Ward, *A Venture in Goodwill, Being the Story of the Women’s International League, 1915–1929* (London: WIL, 1929), p. 19.

<sup>268</sup> WIL, ‘The Kingsway Hall Meeting’, *Towards Permanent Peace* (1915), p. 22.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> WIL, Annual Council Meeting Minutes, 30–31 October 1919, p. 13. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

communication'.<sup>271</sup> The association hoped to use the model of *Jus Suffragii* for its own publication. The first edition of WIL's *Monthly News Sheet* was published in April 1916, which covered issues relating to the Great War, including women's suffrage, peace through negotiation, conscription, news from the international headquarters and other national branches, including those in Australia, Austria, Norway, Denmark, Sweden, USA, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands and Hungary – despite wartime restrictions on correspondence.<sup>272</sup> The journal was usually four to six pages long and published monthly. Edited by WIL's Secretary, the *News Sheet* included articles from its members and ad-hoc reports from local branches. By 1928, 1,050 readers subscribed to the *News Sheet*, which generated enough revenue for the journal to be self-sufficient, although there were frequent appeals for more subscribers. WIL's Press and Publicity Committee were aware that the periodical seemed to 'occupy a niche of its own' and urged each reader to encourage at least one friend to subscribe.<sup>273</sup>

WIL also published articles and news of its activity in the *Woman's Leader*, the journal of National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, the successor of NUWSS.<sup>274</sup> In addition, WIL produced pamphlets, including 'An Appeal to Women', which described the objects of the association and Helen Ward penned a history of the association.<sup>275</sup> WIL also encouraged its members to subscribe to *Pax International*, the international journal of WILPF, which included reports from national sections and the International Executive Committee. The London headquarters housed a library of press cuttings and periodicals, including copies of *Woman's Leader*, UDC's journal *Foreign Affairs*, LNU's *Headway*,

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<sup>271</sup> WIL, 'The Kingsway Hall Meeting', p. 22.

<sup>272</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (April 1916).

<sup>273</sup> WIL, *Thirteenth Yearly Report* (1928), p. 12.

<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Ward, *A Venture in Goodwill*.

and *The National Council for the Prevention of War Bulletin*.<sup>276</sup> Publicity and propaganda were crucial to WIL, as it aimed to educate, shape and inform the British public on international relations.

WIL's first Chair, Helena Swanwick, wrote widely on the issues of war and peace, developing a feminist theory of international relations.<sup>277</sup> She wrote for the *Manchester Guardian* and became editor of the UDC's *Foreign Affairs* following the death of E.D. Morel in 1924. She also published a number of books, an autobiography and a series of pamphlets, including *Women and War*; *Frankenstein and his Monster: Aviation for World War Service*; and *Collective Insecurity*, in which she advocated a feminist perspective on international relations.<sup>278</sup> WIL branches analysed Swanwick's texts in their study circles and the association continued to read and discuss her ideas after she resigned and became isolated from the campaigning activities of WIL in the late 1930s. For instance, in January 1934, Edith Pye, a member of WIL's Executive Committee from 1924, wrote to Swanwick to communicate 'how very much I have enjoyed "New Wars for Old"'.<sup>279</sup> Pye's letter indicates that she had read the pamphlet and discussed Swanwick's conclusions with her friends and WIL colleagues. The postscript reads, 'I have sent the pamphlet to all the 12 members of the Executive of W.I.L.P.F. and I am sure they will appreciate it'.<sup>280</sup> She urged Swanwick to clarify her ideas on the use of military and non-military sanctions. The production and consumption of literature produced by WIL and its members demonstrates the value the association placed on enlightened thought and the development of a feminist theory of international relations.

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<sup>276</sup> WIL, *Thirteenth Yearly Report* (1928), p. 12.

<sup>277</sup> Lucian M. Ashworth, 'Feminism, War and the Prospects for Peace: Helena Swanwick (1864–1939) and the Lost Feminists of Inter-War International Relations', *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, 13:1 (2011), p. 40; Sluga, 'Gender', p. 301.

<sup>278</sup> Helena Swanwick, *Women and War* (London: Union of Democratic Control, 1915); Helena Swanwick, *Frankenstein and his Monster* (London: WIL, 1934); Helena Swanwick, *Collective Insecurity* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937).

<sup>279</sup> E.M. Pye to H.M. Swanwick, 12 January 1934. SCPC, Helena Swanwick, CDG-B, Great Britain.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

## **Conclusion**

The formation of WIL in 1915 marked a new development in the history of both the national and international women's movements. Nonetheless, the association built on the existing ideas and campaigns of the British suffrage campaign. Despite falling under the radar of mainstream historiography, WIL was an integral component of the British women's movement from 1915 onwards. Misconceptions of feminist pacifism have led some scholars to deem WIL's motivations as incoherent. Yet, as this chapter has demonstrated, the emergence of a feminist-pacifist association formalised maternalist ideas about gender roles and peace in combination with a feminist critique of militarism. WIL's convictions regarding the role that women should play in peace making and international relations led it to take a radical stance during the Great War. Moreover, an analysis of WIL's rhetoric reveals its confidence in the complementarity of its opposition to war and patriotic duty, as well as the harmony between its international and national pursuits. The following chapters will continue to explore WIL's convictions in three main areas: feminism, pacifism and internationalism; before uncovering the connections and overlaps between WIL and a range of other activist associations to situate it within the wider field of interwar activism.

## Chapter Two

### WIL's Feminist Campaigns, 1919–1935

Modern women, enfranchised in mind and heart, will set their minds and hearts to the future; will lift up their hearts, heavy with grief and deeply troubled with wrong, with the mighty gesture of the free women. They will cry: "This is the day of the women!" They, freed at last from ignorance and oppression, will turn without one moment's delay, from mourning their dead to rebuilding a world in which the mind of man shall once for all conquer the bottomless folly and wickedness of war. It can be done. The League of Nations can be welded now.<sup>1</sup>

As this extract suggests, members of WIL had cause for a double celebration in 1918. The year heralded both the Representation of the People Act – that enfranchised British women for the first time – and the declaration of the Armistice, which ended the Great War.

Nonetheless, the form of both the peace and the franchise were less than satisfactory – Helena Swanwick wrote that 'when Armistice came I was too weary and sickened to feel the elation for which I had hoped'.<sup>2</sup> There was much work still to be done in order to raise the status of women and to secure a permanent peace. The association continued to focus on its campaign for the enfranchisement of women. As part of a transnational women's organisation, WIL supported suffrage campaigns in other nations, whilst campaigning for further extension of the British franchise to include women on equal terms with men. Its members argued that women, as enfranchised citizens, could contribute to post-war reconstruction and help ensure that peace prevailed. Beyond suffrage, the organisation was committed to a full range of campaigns to extend political, legal and economic rights to women and to raise the status of women worldwide. The newly created League of Nations became a key focus of international women's organisations, as they lobbied national governments to include women in their national delegations to the League and they campaigned at Geneva for rights for women.

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<sup>1</sup> H.M. Swanwick, Maude Royden, Margaret Ashton, K.D. Courtney, 'Letter', *International Women's Suffrage News* (December 1918). BLPES, WILPF/5/2.

<sup>2</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 305.

Clearly, by the 1930s, the post-war optimism had long faded – ‘disillusionment took the place of hope; desperation and violence that of reason’.<sup>3</sup> In 1934, WILPF passed a resolution on the deprivation of women’s rights, which stated that it was ‘much disturbed by the developments in many countries where more and more under pretext of economic crisis, women are dismissed from office or refused employment’. The association demanded ‘that in every country where women have been deprived of these rights they shall be reinstated’.<sup>4</sup> As an international organisation, WILPF highlighted the ‘dangers with which the women of the world and with them the whole cultural life of the peoples are faced by the advance of Fascism’.<sup>5</sup> The Nazi regime prevented German women’s organisations from meeting and WILPF members Lida Gustava Heymann and Anita Augspurg went into exile.<sup>6</sup> Despite the setbacks caused by the international political and economic climate of the interwar years, the women’s movement did enjoy some success. In 1935 – as a result of pressure from international women’s organisations – the question of the status of women made it on to the agenda of the League of Nations.<sup>7</sup>

WIL was committed to raising the status of women, believing that women had an important contribution to make to international relations. The League of Nations, particularly Article 7 of the Covenant, heralded a ‘new era of women’s rights in diplomacy’.<sup>8</sup> Whilst WIL did often uphold traditional gender roles, particularly in relation to women as mothers – as explored in Chapter One – it was ‘grounded in a tough, logical

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<sup>3</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1934), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> WILPF, *Resolution passed by the Executive Committee March 1934 on deprivation of women’s rights*. WILPF, I:D, Reel 21.

<sup>5</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (December 1933), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 33; Jennifer Anne Davy, ‘Pacifist Thought and Gender Ideology in the Political Biographies of Women Peace Activists in Germany, 1899–1970’, *Journal of Women’s History*, 13:3 (2001), p. 35.

<sup>7</sup> Miller, “‘Geneva—the Key to Equality’”, p. 237.

<sup>8</sup> Madeliene Herren, ‘Gender and International Relations through the Lens of the League of Nations (1919–1945)’, in Glenda Sluga and Carolyn James ed, *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics since 1500* (New York: Routledge, 2016), p. 183.

and consistent feminism'.<sup>9</sup> This chapter will consider the organisation's feminist campaigns to raise the status of women on both the national and international stage. Examining WIL's feminism, this chapter will add to emerging literature on the renegotiation of gender roles following the Great War by considering the main campaigns of the interwar women's movement – namely suffrage, the nationality of married women, protective legislation and the League of Nations in relation to women.<sup>10</sup> In so doing, this chapter will show that WIL's commitment to internationalism and its role as a section of a transnational women's organisation shaped its feminist campaigns.

### **Equality or difference?**

Some scholars have argued that the emergence of 'new feminism' during the interwar years reverted to essentialist and conservative views about women's roles and the movement lost its radical purpose and claims.<sup>11</sup> 'New feminism' moved beyond the campaign for political equality between men and women and its campaigns extended into the issues of health, welfare and social reform in relation to women. 'New feminism' has also been called 'social feminism', 'welfare feminism' or 'maternal feminism' to distinguish it from 'egalitarian' feminism. In 1919 the leading suffrage organisation, NUWSS was renamed the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship (NUSEC) to reflect its broader programme, which aimed for the 'recognition of the need for women to do more than seek identity with men in a man-made world'.<sup>12</sup> The organisation sought rights for women as women, rather than equality with men in a male-defined political sphere. As Offen suggests, scholarship has tended to focus on 'individualist' feminists at

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<sup>9</sup> Vellacott, 'A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism', p. 27.

<sup>10</sup> Ingrid Sharp and Matthew Stibbe, 'Introduction: Women's Movements and Female Activists in the Aftermath of War: International Perspectives, 1918–1923', in Sharp and Stibbe eds., *Aftermaths of War, Women's Movements and Female Activists, 1918–1923* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2011), pp. 3–4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.; Banks, *Becoming a Feminist*, p. 128.

<sup>12</sup> NUSEC then became known as the National Council for Equal Citizenship (NCEC) in 1933. NCEC, *The Women's Movement – Has it a Future?* (c.1935). TWL@LSE, 2NSE/X; Harold Smith, *British Feminism in the Twentieth Century* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1990), p. 48.

the expense of 'relational' feminists.<sup>13</sup> In contrast, she asserts that 'relational feminism' – which emphasised differences between men and women – has been as influential on feminism as individualistic approaches.<sup>14</sup> The interwar women's movement was complex; membership and goals often converged and overlapped.<sup>15</sup>

A study of WIL during the interwar years reveals the intricacy of feminist thought and supports Offen's call for a more inclusive history of the women's movement.<sup>16</sup> WIL members campaigned for equality between the sexes on both individualist and relational grounds. The majority of its members had been active in the pre-war suffrage campaign and lobbied for women's right to vote on the same terms as men. Nevertheless, in a proposal on the 'Equal Status of Women' to the 1937 International Congress, the British section asserted that 'it does not believe that equality is secured by insisting on uniformity'.<sup>17</sup> The section supported measures of protective legislation to recognise women's special needs and interests.

In addition, WIL believed that the vote would be a tool for further equality and the creation of permanent peace. As noted in Chapter One, feminist pacifists argued that women should play a role in the international political sphere to balance male militarism because women experienced and understood war in a different way to men. In April 1918, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence sent a paper to the Conference of the World Union of Women for International Concord held in Berne, to be read in her absence. Titled 'Woman's Franchise', the paper argued that 'the safety of the future of the world depends very largely

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<sup>13</sup> Karen Offen, 'Reply to DuBois', *Signs*, 15:1 (1989), p. 199.

<sup>14</sup> Thane, 'What Difference Did the Vote Make?', p. 256; Offen, 'Defining Feminism', p. 137.

<sup>15</sup> Joanne Workman, 'Wading Through the Mire: An Historiographical Study of the British Women's Movement Between the Wars', *University of Sussex Journal of Contemporary History*, 2 (2001), p. 5.

<sup>16</sup> Offen, 'Defining Feminism', p. 157; Karen Offen, 'Reply to Cott', *Signs*, 15:1 (1989), p. 207.

<sup>17</sup> WILPF, 'Equal Status of Women, Proposal of the British Section', *Ninth International Congress, Lihacovice, July 25–31, 1937*. WILPF (DG043), Series I:D, Reel 21.



upon the entrance into world politics of the free woman'.<sup>18</sup> She acknowledged and celebrated that the vote had recently been granted to women in Russia, Britain and Denmark. Yet, she underlined the importance of women's suffrage for international politics, arguing that 'the vote in itself is not emancipation. The attainment of the vote is not the end. It is only the beginning'.<sup>19</sup> As one of the leading members of WIL, she connected women's enfranchisement to international relations. She also urged members of the wider international women's movement to use their new political power to 'enthroned life above machinery'.<sup>20</sup> WIL's use of both relational and individualist feminist arguments is consistent with the earlier movement, which often campaigned for the vote as a tool to secure further equality and rights for women.<sup>21</sup>

Historians have challenged the notion that the women's movement fractured after the extension of the franchise in 1918 and have demonstrated the vitality of the movement throughout the interwar years.<sup>22</sup> A number of organisations, which did not explicitly associate with 'feminism', became increasingly popular after the Great War, such as the Townswomen's Guilds and the Women's Institutes. Guild membership reached 54,000 in 1939.<sup>23</sup> Providing a social space for women – through activities such as craft, needlework and drama – these organisations also focused on education for women on healthcare, politics, the economy and promoted 'active citizenship' amongst newly enfranchised women.<sup>24</sup> Caitríona Beaumont's influential work on mainstream women's organisations

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<sup>18</sup> Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, 'Woman's Franchise' to Marguerite Gobat, 9 April 1918. WILPF, IV, Reel 109.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Wiltsher, *Most Dangerous Women*, p. 2; Ward D'Itri, *Cross-Currents*, p. 4.

<sup>22</sup> For a traditional account see William L. O'Neill, *The Woman Movement: Feminism in the United States and England* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1969), p. 96. For an overview of current scholarship see, Maria DiCenzo, 'Our Freedom and Its Results': Measuring Progress in the Aftermath of Suffrage', *Women's History Review*, 23:3 (2014), p. 423; Bingham, 'An Era of Domesticity'.

<sup>23</sup> Pugh, 'Domesticity and the Decline of Feminism, 1930–1950', p. 148.

<sup>24</sup> Caroline Merz, *After the Vote: The Story of the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds in the Year of Its Golden Jubilee* (Norwich: National Union of Townswomen's Guilds, 1988), p. 12; Beaumont, 'Citizens Not Feminists', pp. 37–41; Andrews, *The Acceptable Face of Feminism*.

has shown that women's groups used the 'terminology of citizenship to enhance women's status in society, instead of feminism'.<sup>25</sup> This concept is useful for a study of WIL, an association that advocated active citizenship, whilst pursuing feminist goals for equality.

In addition, a number of explicitly feminist organisations were also founded during the interwar years. In 1926, activists established the Open Door Council to campaign for equality between men and women, particularly in the workplace. The Council asserted that 'only when all workers, regardless of sex, or marriage or motherhood, are treated as equal will justice be obtained'.<sup>26</sup> The presence of egalitarian feminist organisations alongside women's groups, which emphasised sociability and domesticity, has led to an assumption that the women's movement was diluted and divided by the 1930s.<sup>27</sup> In addition, some perceived the growing concern for peace as well as the development of international women's organisations as a diversion. For example, NUSEC's President, Eleanor Rathbone lamented that 'leading feminists' threw themselves 'in the greatest numbers and with the greatest intensity of interest [into] the sphere of internationalism'.<sup>28</sup> In addition, many organisations distanced themselves from the term 'feminism' after the Great War.<sup>29</sup> For many women of the younger generation, feminism was linked to suffragism and seemed old-fashioned. Suffragist Ray Strachey claimed that 'modern women know amazingly little about what it was like before the war and show a strong hostility to the word 'feminism' and all which they imagine it to connote'.<sup>30</sup> Some activists redefined their 'feminism' as 'humanism' in response to its connotations with radicalism and an anti-male

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<sup>25</sup> Beaumont, 'Citizens Not Feminists', p. 414; see also Cairtriona Beaumont, 'Fighting for the "Privileges of Citizenship": The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), Feminism and the Women's Movement, 1928–1945', *Women's History Review*, 23:3 (2014), pp. 463–79; Sue Innes, 'Constructing Women's Citizenship in the Interwar Period: The Edinburgh Women Citizens' Association', *Women's History Review*, 13:4 (2004), pp. 621–48; Breitenbach and Wright, 'Women as Active Citizens'.

<sup>26</sup> Open Door Council, *Fifth Annual Report, 1930–1* (1931). TWL@LSE, 5ODC/A/02–04.

<sup>27</sup> Alberti, 'Keeping the Candle Burning', p. 309.

<sup>28</sup> Eleanor Rathbone in Ray Strachey, *Our Freedom and Its Results* (London: Hogarth Press, 1936), p. 40.

<sup>29</sup> Beaumont, 'Citizens not Feminists', p. 414.

<sup>30</sup> Strachey, *Our Freedom and its Results*, p. 10.

attitude.<sup>31</sup> Recent work advocates a more inclusive understanding of women's politics and activism.<sup>32</sup> Feminism of the early twentieth century was fluid and connected both 'equality' and 'difference'.<sup>33</sup>

Rupp claims that WILPF also avoided using the term 'feminism'. Nevertheless, many of its members did identify as feminists and – as has been mentioned – the organisation's 'Women's Charter' outlined its feminist aims.<sup>34</sup> Furthermore, during the interwar years the terms 'feminist organisations' and 'women's organisations' and 'feminist movement' and 'women's movement' were often used interchangeably by both activists and commentators, which further complicates our definition of feminism.<sup>35</sup> Rupp does suggest that the international women's movement developed a dynamic 'feminist consciousness' during the twentieth century.<sup>36</sup> WILPF worked alongside a range of women's organisations 'of more and less advanced feminists' and the association worked for 'the widest liberty and scope being given to women'.<sup>37</sup> British WIL joined with other women's organisations 'to draw up a minimum Feminist Programme' in February 1919. The conference produced resolutions on women's suffrage; equal status for men and women on legislative bodies; equality in the laws surrounding nationality, guardianship of children and marriage; the endowment of motherhood; equal pay for equal work; and the traffic of women.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Leila Rupp and Verta Taylor, 'Forging Feminist Identity in an International Movement: A Collective Identity Approach to Twentieth-Century Feminism', *Signs*, 24:2 (1999), p. 374.

<sup>32</sup> Caitríona Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928–1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), p. 3. June Hannam and Karen Hunt have also argued for a more inclusive history of the women's movement in Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women*, p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Bryson, *Feminist Political Theory*, p. 2; Offen, 'Defining Feminism', p. 156.

<sup>34</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 132.

<sup>35</sup> Catia Cecelia Confortini argues that many WILPF members identified as feminists, Confortini, *Intelligent Compassion*, p. 11.

<sup>36</sup> Rupp and Taylor, 'Forging Feminist Identity', p. 380.

<sup>37</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, 'A Regiment of Women', *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1920), p. 2.

<sup>38</sup> WIL, Council Meeting Agenda, 28 February 1919. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

However, the interwar years presented a difficult climate for the women's movement. Liddington claims that 'equal-rights feminism had its back against the wall in the 1930s' as high unemployment led to questions about women's position in the workplace and the growing threat of war demanded the attention of national governments and the League of Nations.<sup>39</sup> Nonetheless, she overlooks WIL's continued feminist activism during the 1920s and 1930s by focusing on the association's campaigns for peace and disarmament. However – as shown in Chapter One – WIL's pacifism was determined by its feminist aims. WILPF's feminism and pacifism were linked and the 'principle of inalienable right to life and liberty' sat at the heart of both ideologies.<sup>40</sup> Moreover, the association campaigned for women's rights and co-operated with the wider British women's movement throughout this period. WIL's feminism therefore expands on current debates on the history of the British and international women's movements. The association debated the concepts of equality and difference, and vehemently argued that enfranchised women could secure peace and contribute to a strong international government.

### **The campaign for women's suffrage**

It is worth recalling that the 1915 congress at The Hague had its roots in the international suffrage movement and was organised by members of the IWSA. Moreover, the women's peace congress resolved to work for the enfranchisement of women,

since the combined influence of the women of all countries is one of the strongest forces for the prevention of war, and since women can only have full responsibility and effective influence when they have equal political rights with men, this International Congress of Women demands their political enfranchisement.<sup>41</sup>

Votes for women continued to be an important feature of the association's work during the interwar years. WILPF used the pages of its periodical – *Internationaal*, which was

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<sup>39</sup> Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common*, p. 152.

<sup>40</sup> Carroll, 'Feminism and Pacifism', p. xi.

<sup>41</sup> WILPF, *Congress Resolutions* (May 1915), p. 8. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

renamed *Pax et Libertas* and then *Pax International* – to report on the progress of women's suffrage internationally. In 1920, *Pax et Libertas* included a table on 'Le vote des femmes', highlighting which countries had extended the vote to women.<sup>42</sup> National sections of WILPF rejoiced in the news of women's enfranchisement in other countries. Marie Stritt, a German WILPF member, congratulated the British section on the extension of the franchise in 1918. In response, WIL wrote 'we join with you in believing that the freedom of women in one country helps the freedom of women in others, and nothing would give us greater happiness than to find that our enfranchisement had hastened the enfranchisement of German women'.<sup>43</sup> Coincidentally, German women were also granted the right to vote later that year.

The British section of the international women's peace organisation, WIL, worked towards 'the emancipation of women' from its formation in October 1915.<sup>44</sup> In February 1918 WIL reported on the 'Suffrage Victory' – as the House of Lords passed the women's suffrage clause of the Representation of the People Act. The legislation enfranchised 8,479,156 women in the British Isles.<sup>45</sup> In June 1918 the association called a special council meeting in Manchester to consider its election policy. At this meeting, WIL decided to take up election work, in order to be prepared if a general election was called that autumn. The association endeavoured to 'help the election of men who will press for peace by immediate negotiation' by encouraging the adoption of the 'best candidate'.<sup>46</sup> WIL's 'best' candidate would promote peace by negotiation; open negotiations; democratic representation at the peace conference; publication of secret treaties; and the

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<sup>42</sup> WILPF, *Pax et Libertas* (February 1920), p. 2.

<sup>43</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, 'Great Britain', *Internationaal* (April-May-June 1918), p. 117.

<sup>44</sup> WIL, *Manifesto Issued by the Conference held on September 30<sup>th</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup>, 1915* (October 1915), p. 2. WILPF, I:B, Reel 9.

<sup>45</sup> Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement since 1914*, p. 25. It is important to note that women rate-payers had been granted the right to vote in local government elections by the 1869 Municipal Franchise Act and were eligible for election to county councils from 1907, see Pugh, p. 1.

<sup>46</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1918), pp. 3–4; Beryl Haslam, *From Suffrage to Internationalism: The Political Evolution of Three British Feminists, 1908–1939* (New York: Peter Lang, 1999), p. 132.

establishment of a 'League of Peoples'. In its campaign for women's rights, WIL used the general election to lobby for the full admission of women to the parliamentary franchise; their admittance to national and international councils; economic independence and legal freedom for women; recognition of the equal moral standard; and reform of the marriage laws.<sup>47</sup>

The association formed an election sub-committee in August 1918 to coordinate its election policy, which was carried out by local election committees.<sup>48</sup> WIL's practical election work included organising new women voters and questioning candidates on their policies regarding peace and women's status. The association produced an election leaflet which included a list of suggested questions for candidates about the League of Nations, reform of the peace treaty, armaments, self-determination for Ireland, and the enfranchisement of all women over the age of twenty-one.<sup>49</sup> WIL continued its policy of questioning candidates at elections throughout the interwar period. For example, during the 1924 election campaign, the association quizzed candidates on their support for the 'principle of arbitration in international disputes'; equal political voting rights; equal pay and opportunities in the professions, the Civil Service and local government services; and equal status for married women in relation to the guardianship of children, employment and nationality.<sup>50</sup>

WIL also supported candidates who expressed their support for peace and women's suffrage, including George Lansbury, E.D. Morel, Frederick Pethick Lawrence, Charles Buxton, Norman Brailsford and Alfred Salter.<sup>51</sup> In particular, the association advocated support of women candidates, who were permitted to stand in elections from 1918. Two

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<sup>47</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1918), p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1918), p. 5.

<sup>49</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1918), p. 5; WIL, *Questions to Candidates* (1918). BLPES, WILPF/4/3.

<sup>50</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1924), p. 3.

<sup>51</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1918), p. 7; Haslam, *From Suffrage to Internationalism*, p. 132.

WIL members stood in the general election held in December 1918 – Charlotte Despard was selected as the Labour candidate in Battersea and Emmeline Pethick Lawrence as the Labour candidate for Rusholme. WIL were ‘delighted to have such a splendid representative of our views to whom to offer our support’.<sup>52</sup> Yet, neither candidate was successfully elected to the House of Commons, perhaps due to their pacifist stance. Pethick Lawrence wrote that she experienced hostility as a candidate for peace during the election campaign and she argued that the result of the election sanctioned the Treaty of Versailles as an ‘instrument of vengeance’.<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, the extension of the franchise in 1918 was limited to women over the age of thirty who met certain property qualifications. The campaign in Britain for equal suffrage continued until 1928 when all women over the age of twenty-one were granted the right to vote on equal terms with men. Notably, the constitution of the Irish Free State granted equal rights and opportunities to all citizens in 1922; women and men over the age of twenty-one were able to vote on equal terms, although a number of legislative measures enacted throughout the 1920s and 1930s restricted Irish women’s citizenship rights.<sup>54</sup> In Britain, WIL worked alongside other women’s organisations – including the NUSEC – for equal suffrage throughout the 1920s.<sup>55</sup> On Saturday 3 July 1926, an alliance of women’s organisations held a mass demonstration in London with the aim of securing equal political rights for men and women. Forty-two different organisations were represented at the equal franchise rally, including the Actresses’ Franchise League, the British Commonwealth League, IWSA, London Society for Women’s Service, National Council of Women,

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<sup>52</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1918), p. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Pethick Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World*, p. 322.

<sup>54</sup> Cairtíona Beaumont, ‘Women, Citizenship and Catholicism in the Irish Free State, 1922–1948’, *Women’s History Review*, 6:4 (1997), p. 565; Lindsey Earner-Byrne, “‘Aphrodite Rising from the Waves’? Women’s Voluntary Activism and the Women’s Movement in Twentieth-Century Ireland’, in Pat Thane & Esther Breitenbach ed., *Women and Citizenship in Britain and Ireland in the Twentieth Century* (London: Continuum, 2010), p. 98.

<sup>55</sup> Law, *Suffrage and Power*, p. 160.

NUSEC, Six Point Group, Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations, Women's Co-operative Guild, Women's Freedom League, and WIL.<sup>56</sup> Commencing with a procession from Embankment through Trafalgar Square to Hyde Park Corner, the demonstration involved speakers from fifteen different groups including representatives of NUSEC and the Women's Freedom League who had also been involved in the formation of WIL – including Margaret Bondfield, Ellen Wilkinson, Kathleen Courtney, Chrystal Macmillan, Helen Ward, Charlotte Despard and Emmeline Pethick Lawrence. The demonstration demanded an immediate Government measure to give votes to women at the age of twenty-one on the same terms as men. In addition, the representatives called for peeresses to be able to take up their seats in the House of Lords.<sup>57</sup>

The campaign also organised mass meetings throughout the summer of 1927. Suffragists held regular open-air assemblies in London and continued to lobby members of the House of Commons 'on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 5 p.m.'. <sup>58</sup> The campaign culminated with a suffrage demonstration at Trafalgar Square, held on 16 July. This gathering was reminiscent of the Edwardian suffrage campaign as it drew together veteran suffragists, including Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Charlotte Despard, and used banners 'which have been carried in every suffrage procession'. <sup>59</sup> The organising committee commented that 'it should be a notable gathering and may well prove to be the last suffrage demonstration held in this country'. <sup>60</sup> It was to be one of the last demonstrations, as the Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act became law the following summer, 2 July 1928.

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<sup>56</sup> Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee, *Equal Political Rights for Men and Women* (1926), p. 1. TWL@LSE, 5ERI/1/B.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Equal Political Rights Campaign Committee, *Suffrage Demonstration Programme* (1927), p. 1. TWL@LSE, 5ERI/1/B.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.



The campaign, however, was far from over and British women's organisations continued to work together in the run up to the 1929 general election – the first in which women could vote on equal terms with men. On 15 April 1929, the Equal Rights General Election Campaign Committee and NUSEC led a deputation to the leader of the opposition, Ramsay MacDonald at the House of Commons. The group presented issues that related to the position and status of women including the rights of married women; women police; admission of women to the House of Lords; equal pay and opportunities in the Civil Service; the marriage bar; family allowances; and birth control. Notably – in line with WIL's internationalist goals – the deputation also presented a resolution calling on the British government to press for equal rights for men and women at the League of Nations and Helena Swanwick spoke on the peaceful settlement of international disputes.<sup>61</sup>

WIL acknowledged the 1929 election as 'the greatest opportunity' that women had ever had to influence the political sphere. The electorate was increased by an additional five million women, creating an impetus on women's organisations to rally new voters 'to arouse the interests of that unknown quality and help it to make its views heard'.<sup>62</sup> Yet, resistance to women's suffrage continued to be expressed in the press. For example, the *Daily Mail* criticised the 'mad experiment' of extending the franchise to women under the age of thirty. The paper argued that equal franchise strengthened 'the impulsive, unbalanced element of the electorate' to the advantage of socialism and to the detriment of the British Empire.<sup>63</sup> WIL educated new voters about international affairs, particularly the Kellogg-Briand Pact, the 'optional clause' on the Permanent Court of Justice, disarmament, and the evacuation of the Rhineland. The branch became a leading member of the British-

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<sup>61</sup> Equal Rights General Election Campaign Committee, *Programme of Subjects and Speakers for the Joint Deputation of Women's Organisations to Ramsay MacDonald*, (15 April 1929), p. 1. TWL@LSE, 5ERI/1/B.

<sup>62</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1928), p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> 'A Mad "Experiment"', *Daily Mail*, 7 November 1927, p. 10.

American Women's Crusade, which aimed to secure a 'parliament of peacemakers' at the 1929 General Election.<sup>64</sup> WIL also hired Agatha Harrison, well known for her work with the Young Women's Christian Association in China, to coordinate its election campaign.<sup>65</sup> WIL played a unique role in the British women's movement as it linked the enfranchisement of women to its concerns for international relations, peace and disarmament, which will be explored further in Chapter Three. At its annual council meeting in March 1929, WIL noted 'its deep satisfaction that equal franchise rights between men and women have at last been achieved. It resolves to do all in its power to stimulate the interest of women voters in all that concerns peace and good international relations.'<sup>66</sup>

WIL aimed to educate women voters and encourage them to become 'active citizens'. Helen McCarthy has shed light on the democratization of interwar British politics and the concept of 'active citizenship'. In her work on the League of Nations Union (LNU), she has shown how the popular organisation aimed to mobilise public opinion on issues relating to international relations.<sup>67</sup> Citizenship was also a popular concept within women's organisations during the interwar years; many societies encouraged active political engagement.<sup>68</sup> Similarly, WIL used its *Monthly News Sheet* to keep its members up-to-date with issues concerning the League of Nations, international relations, peace, disarmament

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<sup>64</sup> Women's Peace Crusade, *Election Campaign for the return of a Parliament of Peacemakers* (June 1929), p. 12. SCPC, Women's Peace Crusade, CDG-B Great Britain, Box 1.

<sup>65</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1928), p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> WIL, *Thirteenth Yearly Report* (1929), p. 17. WILPF, III, Reel 69. The 1928–9 Women's Peace Crusade is explored further in Chapter Three.

<sup>67</sup> Helen McCarthy, 'Democratizing British Foreign Policy: Rethinking the Peace Ballot, 1934–1935', *Journal of British Studies*, 49:2 (2010), p. 361; Helen McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics in Interwar Britain', *The Historical Journal*, 50:4 (2007), p. 892.

<sup>68</sup> Breitenbach and Wright, 'Women as Active Citizens', p. 402.

and national politics. It also produced its own pamphlets, organised public meetings and summer schools to provide 'Education for Internationalism'.<sup>69</sup>

In 1924, WIL held a weekend school in Cambridge to discuss the peace policies of political parties and proposals for Indian Home Rule. Similarly, the Manchester WIL branch held its own weekend school, which aimed to attract younger women, particularly professional women, teachers, administrators and mothers. Lectures and discussions focused on international politics and women's rights, including the Dawes Report; women in the professions; women magistrates; and the position of women in the home, including birth control and married women's right to work.<sup>70</sup> In 1928, WIL ran an international school in Birmingham, which focused on 'new theories of government', including discussions on Bolshevism and Fascism.<sup>71</sup> These summer schools provided a space for like-minded women to meet and discuss issues relating to international relations. They also had a social function and delegates 'exchanged experiences, pooled their knowledge, and inspired each other'.<sup>72</sup> The *Manchester Guardian* reported that 'the increasing popularity of summer schools may be taken in evidence; the number of people who wish to combine instruction with amusement must also be on the increase'.<sup>73</sup> Education was a priority for WIL, as it aimed to educate its members and the wider public on the issues of international law, disarmament and peace. Moreover, like other interwar women's organisations, WIL encouraged women to become politically active and promoted the concept of active citizenship.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1921), p. 2.

<sup>70</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1924), p. 4.

<sup>71</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1928), p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1928), p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> 'The Intellectual Summer Holiday', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 April 1928, p. 8.

<sup>74</sup> Joyce Goodman, 'International Citizenship and the International Federation of University Women before 1939', *History of Education*, 40:6 (2011), p. 706.

Nevertheless, many countries continued to deny women the right to vote, most notably Belgian, French and Swiss women were not able to vote in national elections until after the Second World War. Rupp argues that a divide in the international women's movement opened up between the 'haves' and 'have nots'.<sup>75</sup> This is demonstrated clearly during the debates between IWSA members over the direction of its interwar work. As women achieved their aim nationally, some activists began to broaden their campaigns. The association became the International Alliance of Women for Suffrage and Equal Citizenship (IAWSEC) at its 1926 international congress to accommodate this shift towards a broader agenda. WILPF remained closely connected to the IAWSEC and a number of women were members of both organisations. The Alliance invited WILPF members to its first congress held after the Great War, which convened in Madrid, 2–8 May 1920. The association hoped that holding its suffrage congress in Spain would support the women's movement in that country and in Spanish-speaking South and Central America, 'where there is a new and growing movement for enfranchisement'.<sup>76</sup> International women's organisations supported campaigns for women's suffrage across the globe. The Alliance's 1920 congress argued that 'the enfranchised women of the west must now help the women of the east to free themselves'.<sup>77</sup>

WIL focused on the campaign for women's suffrage in India, in particular. In November 1919, Pethick Lawrence reported on the campaign for votes for Indian women. The article drew parallels between the denial of votes for women in India and Britain, claiming that the Reform Bill for India before Parliament would create a legal barrier to women's franchise rights and 'classes women in the old phraseology amongst minors, lunatics and criminals', drawing on the language of the Edwardian anti-suffrage

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<sup>75</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 208.

<sup>76</sup> WILPF, *Pax et Libertas* (February 1920), p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

campaign.<sup>78</sup> WIL cultivated links with members of the Indian women's movement, urged women to write to their MPs and members of the Cabinet and organised public meetings with speeches from representatives of the Indian women's movement. WIL supported self-determination for India and demanded equal political and educational opportunities for Indian women. WIL opposed the ideas articulated in Katherine Mayo's controversial book *Mother India*, which was published in 1927. Mayo argued that practices like child marriage demonstrated that India was not fit for self-government. WIL's own pamphlet titled 'Mother India's Daughters: The Significance of the Women's Movement' outlined its position on Indian independence and the role Indian women were capable of playing in an autonomous India. WIL argued that 'The Women's Movement in India is growing with a rapidity and vigour which is probably without parallel in any time or country, and it is leading the way towards all that is most hopeful for the future'.<sup>79</sup>

Although WIL was supportive of Indian women's suffrage, it was also influenced by imperial attitudes, which will be explored further in Chapter Four. Antoinette Burton argues that imperial rhetoric dominated the international women's movement as there was an assumption that Western feminism was a blueprint for women's movements and the language of 'sisterhood' was not always based on an equal relationship between women in the 'West' and those in the 'East'.<sup>80</sup> Moreover, Sandell uses the terminology of 'big sister' and 'little sister' to reflect the hierarchies within the relationships between feminists.<sup>81</sup> Nonetheless, Beers asserts that WILPF was more progressive than other international women's organisations, especially the ICW and the IAWSEC, in terms of issues relating to

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<sup>78</sup> Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, 'Votes for Indian Women', *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1919), p. 2.

<sup>79</sup> WIL, *Mother India's Daughters: The Significance of the Women's Movement* (London: WIL, 1934), p. 2. WILPF, III, Reel 77.

<sup>80</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 192.

<sup>81</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 11.

race and empire.<sup>82</sup> Many of its members, such as Ellen Wilkinson and Agatha Harrison, travelled to India and Indian women attended WILPF's sixth congress, held in Prague, 18–24 August 1929.<sup>83</sup>

Nonetheless, the issue of women's suffrage was no longer the main rallying point of the women's movement. Although suffragists continued to lobby for women's enfranchisement, as nations granted women the right to vote, women's movements adopted broader programmes to raise the status of women. Many of the concerns of the women's movement were transnational issues, including the nationality of married women, protective legislation, and the equal status of women. In 1935, Lola Maverick Lloyd – a member of US WILPF and the international Executive Committee – highlighted that 'while nationally, country by country, defeats and victories are partly balanced ... internationally a far vista has cleared before us'.<sup>84</sup> Carol Miller has shown that during this period, women's organisations challenged the notion that the status of women was simply a national issue.<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the establishment of the League of Nations opened up a new arena for women with the potential to secure international legislation on women's rights. Furthermore, the international women's movement was transformed as a host of associations were founded between 1915 and 1939.<sup>86</sup> International women's organisations, like WILPF, lobbied both national governments and the newly instigated League of Nations for equality between women and men.<sup>87</sup> The issue of married women's nationality became one of the concerns of the international women's movement during the interwar years.

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<sup>82</sup> Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism', p. 213.

<sup>83</sup> WIL, 'India', *Nineteenth Yearly Report, March 1934–January 1935* (London: WIL, 1935), p. 7. WILPF, III, Reel 70; Miss Paranjpye and Mrs Chattopadhyaya from India addressed the 1929 Congress: WILPF, *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Prague, August 24 to 28, 1929* (Geneva: WILPF, 1929). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>84</sup> Lola Maverick Lloyd, 'The New Arena', *Unity*, 21 January 1935, p. 213. WILPF, V, Reel 110.

<sup>85</sup> Miller, "'Geneva—the Key to Equality'", p. 219.

<sup>86</sup> Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship*, p. 62.

<sup>87</sup> Miller, "'Geneva—the Key to Equality'", p. 220.

### **The nationality of married women**

The women's movement both in Britain and on the international stage took up vigorous campaigns during the Great War and interwar years to secure the independent nationality of married women. The long-standing tradition of *couverture* – whereby a married woman's legal rights were subsumed by those of her husband's – had a lasting influence on the nationality rights of married women into the twentieth century. Marriage legislation in many countries dictated that women would lose their right to independent nationality upon marriage. Thus, if a woman married a man of a different nationality to her own, she would assume the nationality of her husband upon their marriage. This disparity inherent in legal practice would not have affected the majority of women, as only a small number married men from different countries. Nevertheless, the principle that married women did not have the right to independent nationality represented the extensive inequalities remaining between men and women. The ICW took up the issue in 1904. The Council founded a subcommittee on nationality at its third quinquennial meeting held in Berlin, alongside its committees on finance, press, peace and arbitration, laws concerning the legal position of women, suffrage and the rights of citizenship, 'white slave traffic', and the equal moral standard.<sup>88</sup>

However, the problems posed by the practice of married women losing their nationality became most pertinent during the Great War. The IWSA took up the issue as it affected women in the belligerent nations.<sup>89</sup> Some women became enemy aliens in their home countries. In Britain, the Aliens Restriction Act and DORA – introduced during the opening stages of the war – affected women whose nationality had changed on marriage.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup> ICW, 'Conveners of Committees', *Quinquennial Reunion in Canada, 1909*, p. 2. TWL@LSE, 5ICW/B/06.

<sup>89</sup> Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship*, p. 80; IWSA, *The International Woman Suffrage News* (October 1917), p. 2.

<sup>90</sup> Dorothy Page, "'A Married Woman, or a Minor, Lunatic or Idiot': The Struggle of British Women against Disability in Nationality, 1914-1933", (PhD Thesis, University of Otago, 1984), p. 25.

WILPF promoted the independent nationality of married women as the issue was transnational and it was included in the organisation's 1919 women's charter.<sup>91</sup> In addition, the introduction of the Cable Act in the USA in 1922, which granted married women independent citizenship, spurred the international women's campaign for equal nationality rights.<sup>92</sup> The British women's movement also highlighted that women's right to independent nationality had been secured in Russia, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Austria in their demands the extension of independent nationality rights.<sup>93</sup>

Chrystal Macmillan, one of the British delegates to the 1915 Hague congress, became the leading figure in the campaign against the inequality in nationality laws. Macmillan served as Secretary to the IWSA from 1913 to 1920, and she used the Alliance's London Headquarters as the base of the nationality campaign. Notably, Macmillan was also a lawyer, and one of the first women to be called to the Bar in Britain in 1924. She used her legal expertise to coordinate the nationality of married women campaign both in Britain and internationally.<sup>94</sup> In Britain, the nationality laws were closely linked to the common law practice that ensured the 'personality of a woman was absorbed in that of her husband'.<sup>95</sup> Nevertheless, the British campaign argued that 'while other disabilities affecting married women have come down from a remote past' the inequality in nationality was a recent introduction. Legal practice introduced in 1844 ensured that a foreign woman who married a British subject was naturalised automatically without her consultation, and in 1870, a British woman was deprived of her nationality upon her marriage to a foreigner. Campaigners protested that British women 'along with lunatics

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<sup>91</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Second International Congress* (1919), p. 22. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>92</sup> Candice Lewis Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own, Women, Marriage and the Law of Citizenship* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), p. 195.

<sup>93</sup> Chrystal Macmillan, *Nationality of Married Women: Present Tendencies* (1925), p. 147. TWL@LSE, 5NMW/E/02.

<sup>94</sup> Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement: A Reference Guide 1866–1928* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 364.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.



and minors, [had] been explicitly placed under the disability of being unable to naturalise'.<sup>96</sup> The campaign, therefore, lobbied for the recovery of married woman's right to independent nationality.

In 1921, the British and Irish National Council of Women produced a Bill – drafted by Macmillan – which Sir John Butcher introduced in parliament on 28 March 1922. The Bill aimed to put married women in the same position as married men under the nationality laws and remove the restrictions on women being able to naturalise.<sup>97</sup> The Bill had cross-party support, including support from the two female MPs: Nancy Astor and Margaret Wintringham. A Nationality Bill was repeatedly introduced into parliament between 1922 and 1939. Ellen Wilkinson, a WIL member and Labour MP from 1924, persistently raised questions about the nationality of married women in the House of Commons. In a speech to the Commons supporting the Bill introduced by Ethel Bentham in November 1930, Wilkinson pointed out the hypocrisy in the existing nationality laws, arguing that 'the feeling of nationality is supposed to be inherent in human nature but a woman is not supposed to have that feeling, or at least that she can change it'.<sup>98</sup> British women's organisations co-operated in the campaign for nationality under the auspices of the Nationality of Married Women Pass the Bill Committee. Formed by the National Council of Women, Macmillan chaired the Committee, which constituted of forty-three different organisations, including the Association of Moral and Social Hygiene, British Federation of University Women, NUSEC, Open Door Council, Six Point Group, Women's Freedom League, and WIL.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> The National Council of Great Britain and Ireland, *Select Committee of the Nationality of Married Women* (June 1923). TWL@LSE, 5NMW/D/01.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Ellen Wilkinson, 'Nationality of Women Bill', HC Deb 28 November 1930, Vol 245 cc 1675-755.

<sup>99</sup> Chrystal Macmillan, *Circular Letter*, 22 January 1932. TWL@LSE, 5NMW/B/02.

The British government did appear to favour reform of the nationality laws. In 1923, a Joint Select Committee was set up to examine the issue with Macmillan selected as one of the representatives on the committee.<sup>100</sup> However, debates about the British Empire – in particular the relationship between Britain and its Dominions – dominated discussions on nationality and hampered the legislation's progress. Deliberations at the Imperial Conference in 1926 revealed that not all Dominions would accept reform. Similarly, a breach in Commonwealth unity on the issue of nationality legislation was considered unacceptable. During the interwar years a paradox emerged in the governance of the British Empire – the Dominions did not have full autonomy, yet neither were they subject possessions of the British crown.<sup>101</sup> In addition, increasing nationalism in the Dominions weakened the legal definition of British nationality. Therefore, the British government was reluctant to push through reform of the laws affecting women's nationality.<sup>102</sup> The Pass the Bill Committee protested that debates relating to the Empire were delaying a decision on nationality, asserting that 'the interests of the women of this country should not be made subservient to the views of one or two Dominions or to the uniformity of nationality laws'. Alternatively, the committee called on the government to abandon its commitment to uniformity within the Dominions and to use its influence within the Empire in the interests of women.<sup>103</sup> Moreover, the committee argued that there was support for reform of the nationality laws in the Dominions. The committee worked with women's organisations in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Irish Free State, Bermuda and Ceylon to urge the British and Dominion Governments to 'pass into law measures to give effect to

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<sup>100</sup> Cheryl Law, *Women: A Modern Political Dictionary* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000), p. 100.

<sup>101</sup> Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society*, p. 23.

<sup>102</sup> M. Page Baldwin, 'Subject to Empire: Married Women and the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act', *Journal of British Studies*, 40:4 (2001), p. 524.

<sup>103</sup> Pass the Bill Committee Deputation to Government, 20 March 1933. TWL@LSE, 5NMW/B/04.

this policy of justice' so that a woman may enjoy the same rights to nationality as a man.<sup>104</sup>

Thus, it is clear that the issue of women's nationality had imperial as well as international dimensions.

Historians of British feminism's relationship with imperialism have demonstrated that the question of citizenship and empire allowed feminists to project the category of 'other' on colonial women to justify their own calls for citizenship.<sup>105</sup> Clare Midgley has shown how the 'Woman Question' was developed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in the context of imperial expansion, which influenced feminist thought and activism.<sup>106</sup> Nonetheless, Burton argues that the influence of imperialism on feminists came into conflict with feminist internationalism.<sup>107</sup> In contrast, others have argued that the Empire both hindered and propelled internationalism during the interwar years.<sup>108</sup> The campaign for women's nationality in Britain and the Empire demonstrates how the women's movement used and challenged the British Empire to further its goals for women's rights on the international level. WILPF was one of the most outspoken critics of colonialism.<sup>109</sup> Yet, WIL's relationship with the British Empire was complex, as will be explored further in Chapter Four. Moreover, in the case of married women's nationality, British feminists shared their experiences with women across the Empire, through a sense of 'imperial citizenship'.<sup>110</sup> In particular, the demands for nationality rights demonstrates

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<sup>104</sup> Pass the Bill Committee, *Petition on the Nationality of Married Women addressed to the Conference of the British and Dominion Governments of the British Commonwealth of Nations* (July 1932). TWL@LSE, 5NMW/B/04.

<sup>105</sup> Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity: British Imperial Suffragism and "Global Sisterhood" 1900–1915', p. 55; Burton, *Burdens of History*.

<sup>106</sup> Clare Midgley, *Feminism and Empire: Women Activists in Imperial Britain, 1790–1865* (London: Routledge, 2007); similarly Philippa Levine identifies the influence of gender on empire from the eighteenth century through to post-colonialism, Philippa Levine, *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>107</sup> Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity', p. 49.

<sup>108</sup> Ian Christopher Fletcher, Laura E. Nym Mayhall and Philippa Levine, *Women's Suffrage in the British Empire: Citizenship, Nation and Race* (London: Routledge, 2000), p. 103.

<sup>109</sup> Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism', p. 204.

<sup>110</sup> Daniel Gorman, *Imperial Citizenship: Empire and the Question of Belonging* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 20.

feminists' challenge to imperial policy, contributing to what Barbara Bush has called, the 'feminisation' of empire after 1918.<sup>111</sup>

In 1930, a Conference on the Codification of International Law was held at The Hague between 13 March and 12 April. This conference sought to reach an international agreement to settle issues relating to nationality and statelessness.<sup>112</sup> The codification conference did not secure equality between men and women in the nationality laws. Nonetheless, Candice Lewis Bredbenner argues that the conference was a 'pivotal event in the history of women's nationality rights' as it led to the coalescence of international women's organisations in the campaign for nationality.<sup>113</sup> In 1931, Macmillan founded an International Committee for Action on the Nationality of Married Women, which coordinated the activity of international women's organisations. The committee aimed to delay the ratification of the Hague Convention and urged that any international convention on nationality should ensure equality between men and women.<sup>114</sup> The League of Nations responded to the international committee's demands by placing the issue of women's nationality on its agenda and creating its own Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality (WCCN) the following year. The League-sponsored committee was made up of leading international women's organisations, including WILPF, ICW, IAWSEC, All-Asian Conference of Women, Inter-American Commission of Women, and Equal Rights International.<sup>115</sup>

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<sup>111</sup> Barbara Bush, 'Feminising Empire? British Women's Activist Networks in Defending and Challenging Empire from 1918 to Decolonisation', *Women's History Review*, 25:4 (2016), p. 500.

<sup>112</sup> League of Nations, 'Convention on Certain questions relating to the Conflict of Nationality Laws', *Official Journal* (July 1930), p. 847.

<sup>113</sup> Bredbenner, *A Nationality of Her Own*, p. 112.

<sup>114</sup> Extract from a Report by the Secretary-General to the Assembly of the League of Nations on the Question of the Nationality of Married Women (1931). TWL@LSE, 5NMW/E/03.

<sup>115</sup> Ellen Carol DuBois, 'Internationalizing Married Women's Nationality: The Hague Campaign of 1930' in Karen Offen ed., *Globalizing Feminisms, 1789–1945* (Oxon: Routledge, 2010), p. 204.

Due to pressure from international women's organisations, the League of Nations considered the nationality of married women question. The Twelfth Assembly of the League of Nations invited the WCCN to give testimony, which marked 'the first time in the eleven years of its existence the League of Nations has voted to ask the opinion of the organized women of the world upon legislation which particularly concerns them'.<sup>116</sup> WIL's representatives on the committee 'stood for both freedom and equality' asserting that both men and women should be able to choose whether to change or retain their nationality.<sup>117</sup> In 1935, the Sixteenth Assembly of the League of Nations thanked international women's organisations for their input on the debates on nationality.<sup>118</sup>

The WCCN urged the League of Nations to adopt and encourage nations to ratify the Equal Nationality Treaty rather than the 1930 Hague Convention. The Treaty – formulated at the 1933 Conference of the Pan-American Union – stated that 'there shall be no distinction based on sex as regard nationality, in their legislation or in their practice'.<sup>119</sup> Government representatives from Latin America and the USA signed the Treaty.<sup>120</sup> Members of the WCCN comprised of feminists who promoted equal rights – with an exclusive focus on nationality – and those who had broader goals for citizenship.<sup>121</sup> The Women's Consultative Committee (WCC) dropped 'nationality' from its title in 1936 to embrace a broader agenda for equality. Lola Maverick Lloyd –WILPF's representative on the WCC – stressed the feminist aspect of the work of both WILPF and the WCC, claiming that 'our League [WILPF], having always stood for equality as our goal, cannot do

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<sup>116</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (March 1931), p. 2.

<sup>117</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (August 1931), p. 4.

<sup>118</sup> Extract from a Report by the Secretary-General to the Assembly of the League of Nations on the Question of the Nationality of Married Women (1931). TWL@LSE, 5NMW/E/03.

<sup>119</sup> The Women's Consultative Committee, *Facts about the Equality Treaties* (1935). TWL@LSE, 5NMW/E/03.

<sup>120</sup> The Treaty was signed by Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, El Salvador, USA and Uruguay. Ibid.

<sup>121</sup> Zimmermann, 'Liaison Committees'.

otherwise now' and that 'organizations such as ours must influence governments to send delegates to the Assembly the best feminists they have'.<sup>122</sup> The Inter-American Commission of Women and WILPF 'felt equality in nationality was only a small step' and that 'it was high time the League should consider the whole status of women'.<sup>123</sup>

The interwar campaign for the nationality of married women was also entangled with the broader campaign for an Equal Rights Treaty. The Inter-American Commission of Women held in Montevideo in 1933 formulated the treaty, consisting of a single clause: 'The contracting states agree that upon the ratification of the Treaty, men and women shall have Equal Rights throughout the territory subject to their respective jurisdictions'.<sup>124</sup> Supporters of this clause hoped that the treaty would secure equality in international law. Moreover, its proponents opposed any form of 'protective' legislation, considering such measures to be a restriction upon women's opportunities.

Equal Rights International (ERI) led the campaign for the Equal Rights Treaty. Founded in 1930, ERI was an explicitly feminist organisation. The International was also a member of the newly formed Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations alongside WILPF. The Liaison Committee was an alliance between international women's organisations including WILPF, ICW, IAWSEC, World Union of Women for International Concord, International Federation of University Women, World's Young Women's Christian Association, St. Joan's Social and Political Alliance and Equal Rights International. WILPF officially endorsed the Equal Rights Treaty at its international congress in Zurich 1934 and urged its national sections to work for its adoption. At this event, WILPF restated its aims, to outline its commitment to 'social, economic and

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<sup>122</sup> Lola Maverick Lloyd, *Report of the Women's Consultative Committee for the Bruges Executive Committee Meeting of WILPF* (1936). WILPF, V, Reel 110.

<sup>123</sup> Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality, *Information Bulletin*, 15 October 1934, p. 5. SCPC, Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality, CDG-B Switzerland.

<sup>124</sup> Equal Rights International, *Constitution of Equal Rights International* (1931). TWL@LSE, 5ERI/1/A/02.

political equality for all without distinction of sex, race or opinion'.<sup>125</sup> Moreover, there was some overlap between the membership of ERI and WILPF. For example, German WILPF member Gertrude Baer served as the Vice Chair of ERI. Austrian feminist Yella Hertzka was also a member of both ERI and WILPF.<sup>126</sup> Nevertheless, the issue of 'protective' legislation became a contentious one within WILPF and the wider women's movement.

Although in Britain and internationally, WILPF did not lead the campaign for the nationality of married women, it was a member of both the British and international committees on the issue. Moreover, a number of its members overlapped with other international women's organisations – particularly, Chrystal Macmillan who was a founding member of WIL and led the campaign for women's nationality until her death in 1937. The WCCN used WILPF's headquarters in Geneva to coordinate its campaign directed at the League of Nations. In addition, WIL members lobbied government representatives at Geneva. For example, Pethick Lawrence led a deputation of women from the nationality committee to meet Madame Litvinoff – the wife of the Russian delegate to the League of Nations – to gain Russian support for the campaign.<sup>127</sup> The WCCN believed that its work showed that the 'feminist flag' was still flying. Furthermore, WILPF reported regularly on the nationality campaign, describing the WCCN as 'feminists before the League of Nations'.<sup>128</sup> The committee lobbied the League, considering the nationality of married women to be a transnational feminist concern and articulated 'the opinion of organized women all over the world on a subject of particular interest to women'.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>125</sup> WILPF, 'Statement of Aims', *Pax International*, (October–November 1934).

<sup>126</sup> Equal Rights International, *Minutes of Annual General Meeting*, 5 September 1931; Equal Rights International, *Minutes* (1934). TWL@LSE, 5ERI/1/A/04.

<sup>127</sup> Lloyd, 'The New Arena', p. 214.

<sup>128</sup> WCCN, *Information Bulletin*, 25 January 1935, p. 2. SCPC, WCCN, CDG-B, Switzerland; WILPF, *Pax International* (December 1930), p. 3.

<sup>129</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (August 1931), p. 4.

Despite the interwar feminist campaign to reform the nationality laws that affected married women, the British Nationality Act – ensuring married women had a right to their own nationality – did not become law until 1948. Internationally, the United Nations General Assembly did not enforce the Convention on the Nationality of Married Women until 1958. Notwithstanding the slow progress of the campaign, the interwar national and international campaign for married women's nationality demonstrates an active campaign by women for equality. Nonetheless, the notion of equality was controversial and debates on nationality rights evoked discussions surrounding 'protective' legislation for women workers.

### **The rights of women workers**

The rights of women as workers fell under WIL's concern to raise the status of women and to secure equal rights between men and women. The issue of women's work was particularly pertinent in the aftermath of the Great War. Although the impact of the war on the industrial position of women is debated, it has been well documented that British women undertook various forms of employment during the conflict.<sup>130</sup> Trade unions, which tended to be male-dominated and predominantly represented the rights of male workers, were concerned with the 'dilution' and 'substitution' of labour caused by the employment of women. Moreover, the Restoration of Pre War Practices Act ensured that the majority of female employment was for the 'duration' only.<sup>131</sup> Along with other women's associations, WIL protested the threats posed to women's employment at the end of the war.

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<sup>130</sup> Deborah Thom, *Nice Girls and Rude Girls: Women Workers in World War I* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1998), p. 3; see also Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield, *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in Two World Wars* (London: Pandora, 1987).

<sup>131</sup> Penny Summerfield, 'Women and war in the twentieth century' in June Purvis ed., *Women's History: Britain, 1850–1945* (London & New York: Routledge, 1995), p. 272.



At its 1919 Council meeting, the association debated the issue of female employment. Whilst largely in consensus about women's right to work, the language used in the discussions indicates that members and branches took slightly different positions on the value of women's work. Dr Alice Ker, a representative of Liverpool WIL, suggested 'that the W.I.L. show its appreciation of women's splendid work during the past five years by making a firm stand against the present practice of turning women from their posts in the Civil Service and other Public Departments'.<sup>132</sup> Ker's resolution advocated that women should be rewarded with equal rights to employment and pay as they had proved themselves worthy by contributing to the war effort, notably referring to professional middle-class women. Yet, Annot Robinson – Manchester WIL's paid organiser – 'objected to the resolution on the grounds that women had a claim for employment as human beings, not as people who had done war work'.<sup>133</sup> She urged WIL to take a much firmer stance on the issue of women's work and put forward the following resolution:

This Council protests against the wholesale and needless dismissal of women from Government employment, without any provision for their future welfare. It urged the Government to tide over the period of transition from war industry to peace, and demands the use of the Queen's Work for Women Fund and local funds to provide:-

- (a) Employment for unskilled manual workers at not less than subsistence rates;
- (b) Education for young workers with payment for maintenance;
- (c) Further training for semi-skilled workers.<sup>134</sup>

WIL adopted this motion with an additional clause that urged the Government 'to throw open all Civil Service posts on equal terms to both sexes'.<sup>135</sup> The outcome of WIL's discussion illustrates that most of its members were willing to take a firm commitment on women's work.

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<sup>132</sup> Dr. Ker, Annual Council meeting, Minutes, 30–31 October 1919, p. 14. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>133</sup> Annot Robinson, Annual Council, Minutes, 30–31 October 1919, p. 14. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Ibid, p. 15.

Although the association lobbied for the equal position of women in industry, it focused primarily on the position of women in professional employment. In 1924, WIL issued a resolution condemning ‘the dismissal of highly qualified women on the grounds of marriage from the service of local authorities’, referring to the widespread use of the marriage bar.<sup>136</sup> In particular, WIL urged for posts in the Civil Service and Police to be open to women and men on equal terms. The campaign for equal pay for equal work within the Civil Service attracted a coalition of British women’s associations – including the NUSEC, Women’s Freedom League, Six Point Group and the London and National Society for Women’s Service – and female MPs, including Ellen Wilkinson who reported on the campaign and its progress in Parliament for WIL’s *Monthly News Sheet*.<sup>137</sup>

The Manchester WIL appears to have been the most actively concerned with women’s rights as workers. On 20 September 1919, the branch held a ‘Women’s Right to Work’ conference. Women in both professional and industrial work spoke on the issue of equal pay for equal work.<sup>138</sup> On 8 November, the branch hosted Barbara Drake, Chair of the Women’s Labour Research Department, who spoke on the issue of the ‘Displacement of Women Workers’ after the war. Margaret Ashton, Chair of Manchester WIL, stated that the importance of this subject ‘cannot be emphasised too strongly’, particularly in ‘the period of transition from war to peace’.<sup>139</sup>

While activists could agree to defend female employment, the issue of equality in the workplace provoked a complex debate within the women’s movement, centred on the question of protective legislation. Traditionally, historians have assumed that labour

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<sup>136</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: WIL, 1925), p. 18. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>137</sup> Ellen Wilkinson, ‘Equal Pay for Equal Work’, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1936), p. 1; see also, Harold Smith, ‘British feminism and the equal pay issue in the 1930s’, *Women’s History Review*, 5:1 (1996), pp. 97–110; Helen Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation: Women’s Work in the Civil Service and the London County Council, 1900–55* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

<sup>138</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1919), p. 4.

<sup>139</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1919), p. 4.

women supported the introduction of protective measures to defend the position of working women and their wages, whereas liberal feminists opposed such legislation as a threat to equality, yet this is an over-simplification.<sup>140</sup> At a WIL conference to ‘draw up a minimum Feminist Programme’ on 28 February 1919, the Manchester branch proposed a resolution on the issue of women’s labour, asserting that ‘no organisation of men or government representative of men only, shall have the power to exclude women or girls from any employment they desire to take’.<sup>141</sup> This statement suggests that Manchester WIL objected to any kind of ‘protective’ legislation in relation to women’s labour. Yet, the association’s position on the issue appeared to shift over time. Moreover, the debates within WIL and the wider WILPF on this topic represented a divergence of views on the rights of women in the workplace, complicating the notion that working-women supported protection and middle-class liberal feminists did not. WIL’s connections to the British labour movement may have contributed to its position on this issue.

### *The question of protective legislation as an international debate*

Discussions within the women’s movement focused on what was known as either special, restrictive or, protective legislation.<sup>142</sup> Harold Smith suggests that this issue threatened the unity of the British movement.<sup>143</sup> Women’s movements across Europe also debated the relationship between women’s employment, motherhood, and equality.<sup>144</sup> Yet, divides on the issue of protective legislation were far from clear-cut. The discussions within international women’s organisations signify a shared commitment to raising the issues surrounding women as workers at the international level, particularly at the newly formed

<sup>140</sup> Pamela Graves, *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics, 1918–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 138–40.

<sup>141</sup> WIL, Conference of Women’s Societies, Agenda, 28 February 1919. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>142</sup> Ulla Wikander, ‘Some “Kept the Flag of Feminist Demands Waving”’: Debates at International Congresses on Protecting Women Workers’ in Ulla Wikander, Alice Kessler-Harris and Jane Lewis eds., *Protecting Women: Labor Legislation in Europe, the United States, and Australia, 1880–1920* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), p. 29.

<sup>143</sup> Smith, *British Feminism*, p. 58.

<sup>144</sup> Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 277.

International Labour Organisation (ILO).<sup>145</sup> Discussions focused particularly on women's position in the workforce: was special protection necessary due to the differences – primarily women's maternal functions – between men and women? The concern for women's economic independence permeated the debates over protective legislation, indicating a radicalism that extended beyond the campaign for the right to vote.<sup>146</sup>

Proponents of protective legislation considered such measures progressive as they promoted women's interests. Yet, opponents argued that protective legislation sustained an essentialist concept of femininity and advocated for equality in all spheres including the workplace. Protectionists argued that legislation could help to level the playing field and thereby, secure equality in the end. Ultimately, the debate over protective legislation returned to the recurring discussion over equality or difference, and called on feminists to define what they meant by 'equality'. WILPF was divided on the issue and national sections took different positions on the implementation of protective legislation. WIL tended to favour protective measures. From its inception, the branch included a vague commitment to 'the emancipation of women and the protection of their interests'.<sup>147</sup>

The legislation surrounding labour practices and working women became an international issue during the interwar years. A number of international conventions aiming to protect women in certain unhealthy or dangerous occupations were drawn up.<sup>148</sup> For example, the Berne (1906), Washington (1919) and Geneva (1934) Nightwork Conventions prohibited women's work at night in certain industries. The 1919 Washington

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<sup>145</sup> Ulla Wikander, 'Demands on the ILO by Internationally Organized Women in 1919', in Jasmien Van Daele, Geert Van Goethem, and Magaly Rodríguez García eds., *ILO Histories: Essays on the International Labour Organization and Its Impact on the World During the Twentieth Century* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2011), p. 86; Carol Riegelman Lubin and Anne Winslow, *Social Justice for Women: The International Labour Organization and Women* (Durham, USA: Duke University Press, 1990), p. 8.

<sup>146</sup> Wikander, 'Demands on the ILO by Internationally Organized Women in 1919', p. 88.

<sup>147</sup> WIL, *Manifesto Issued by the Conference held on September 30<sup>th</sup> and October 1<sup>st</sup>* (October 1915), p. 2. WILPF, I:B, Reel 9.

<sup>148</sup> Nora Natchkova and Céline Schoeni, 'The ILO, Feminists and Expert Networks: The Challenges of a Protective Policy (1919–1934)', in Joëlle Droux & Sandrine Kott eds., *Globalizing Social Rights: The International Labour Organization and Beyond* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 52.

Childbirth Convention prevented the employment of women in industrial occupations during the first six weeks after childbirth. The 1921 Geneva White Lead Painting Convention and 1935 Underground Work (Women) Draft Convention prohibited women's work in these areas. Moreover, women organised transnationally to discuss women's rights as workers. In October 1919 women from nineteen nations met in Washington D.C. for the International Congress of Working Women. This gathering challenged the male-dominated ILO and international labour policy. Transnational women's organisations attempted to influence the ILO during the 1920s and 1930s and lobbied the ILO to include women in its category of 'labour'.<sup>149</sup>

Moreover, organisations of working women, such as the British National Federation of Working Women and the American Women's Trade Union League asserted women's interests as workers alongside the International Federation of Working Women (IFWW), which was active between 1919 and 1924.<sup>150</sup> Nonetheless, Lara Vapnek has demonstrated that the definition of 'working woman' was disputed and questions about whether women should seek special protection as mothers in the workplace threatened the unity of the 1919 conference.<sup>151</sup> Similarly, Rupp highlights the rifts within IWSA that opened up on the issue of protective legislation, which became a key point of contention at the Alliance's 1926 Congress.<sup>152</sup> WILPF was considered an 'egalitarian' organisation, as demonstrated by its support for the Equal Rights Treaty, yet its national sections were also divided on the issue of protection.

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<sup>149</sup> Ibid, p.50; Wikander, 'Demands on the ILO', p. 67.

<sup>150</sup> Geert Van Goethem, 'An International Experiment of Women Workers: The International Federation of Working Women, 1919–1924', *Revue Belge de Philologie et d'Histoire*, 84:4 (2006), p. 1029 & 1037; Cathy Hunt, *The National Federation of Women Workers, 1906–1921* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

<sup>151</sup> Lara Vapnek, 'The 1919 International Congress of Working Women: Transnational Debates on the "Woman Worker"', *Journal of Women's History*, 26:1 (2014), p. 160.

<sup>152</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 142.

In December 1929, WILPF held a debate on protective legislation at its headquarters in Geneva, which incorporated the diversity of opinion within the women's movement. Women from a range of organisations presented their views on the matter, including Martha Mundt from the International Labour Office; Edith Rogers represented the Open Door International; Mary Sheepshanks from WIL; and IAWSEC's Emilie Gourde. Mundt defended legislation that restricted nightwork for industrial women and prevented women from working with white lead. However, Rogers argued that any form of protective legislation for women would limit their opportunities, reduce their status as workers and keep them in low-paid positions, thus implying that women's labour was inferior to men's work. In relation to the debate over nightwork, the Open Door International favoured legislation that would restrict such work for both men and women equally.<sup>153</sup> Sheepshanks pointed out that English working women were well organised and had representatives in parliament, including Susan Lawrence and Margaret Bondfield. She supported the 'manifesto in opposition to the campaign against protective legislation'.<sup>154</sup>

At its ninth international congress, held in July 1937, the divides between national sections of WILPF on the issue of protective legislation were made clear. WIL delegates pursued a protectionist policy, whereas representatives from France, Denmark and the Netherlands opposed restrictive legislation and favoured complete equality between men and women. WIL sent an 'Equal Status of Women Resolution' to the congress, outlining its view that equality was not the same as 'uniformity'. A lack of protective legislation, they argued, would negatively affect working women and prevent them from participating fully in the economic sphere.<sup>155</sup> Alternatively, the Dutch WILPF section expressed its concern 'at the universal regression with regard to women's rights, in some cases for

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<sup>153</sup> WILPF, Debate on Protective Legislation, 11 December 1929, Geneva. WILPF, I:B, Reel 10.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> WIL, 'Proposal of the British Section, Equal Status of Women', *Ninth International Congress, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia*, 25–31 July 1937. WILPF, I:D, Reel 21.

economic in some for other reasons' and based its proposal for the equal status of women on the 'complete collaboration of men and women'.<sup>156</sup> Despite the divides within WILPF over the issue of protective legislation, the organisation attempted to maintain its unity. WILPF asserted that collaboration with other organisations should satisfy the divergences along these lines. WILPF was represented on both the Women's Consultative Committee for Nationality 'which comprises mostly organizations standing against protective legislation' and also on the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations 'whereon nearly all organizations are in favour of special protective legislation', thus women on both sides on the debate were represented with one of WILPF's partners. Despite WIL's position, its chair, Barbara Duncan Harris hoped that it would be made clear that not all members were supportive of protective measures.<sup>157</sup>

The British section's position on the debate was complex. WIL had close links to the British labour movement. Labour women typically tended to favour protective legislation, particularly in the context of economic recession during the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>158</sup> The connections between WIL and the labour movement will be explored further in Chapter Five, yet it is important to note that WIL members took an interest in the economic position of working women and there was also an overlap between WIL's membership and that of the labour movement. For example, Margaret Bondfield was a vice Chair of WIL's original Executive Committee, she was also a representative of the British women's labour movement at the International Congress of Working Women in 1919.<sup>159</sup> In 1919, Annot Robinson – a member of the Manchester WIL, who also campaigned for the

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<sup>156</sup> WILPF, 'Proposal of the Dutch Section, On the Rights of Women', *Ninth International Congress, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, 25–31 July 1937*. WILPF, I:D, Reel 21.

<sup>157</sup> WILPF, 'Minutes', *Ninth International Congress, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, 25 – 31 July 1937*. WILPF, I:D, Reel 21.

<sup>158</sup> Pamela Graves, *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics, 1918–1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 139.

<sup>159</sup> Mary Walker, 'Labour Women and Internationalism', in Lucy Middleton ed., *Women in the Labour Movement* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p. 87; see also Bondfield, *A Life's Work*.

Women's Labour League – urged that 'W.I.L ought to take the lead in creating public opinion on women's labour and economic position'.<sup>160</sup>

Nonetheless, WIL was predominantly a middle-class women's organisation. Many of its leaders had a university education and were either employed in a professional occupation, engaged in social work, or hailed from the wealthy middle class or aristocracy. Sybil Oldfield has analysed the composition of the British Committee of the International Congress of Women – the forerunner to WIL – and found that only 8% of its members were working class.<sup>161</sup> Yet, Oldfield argues that the make-up of the committee does not indicate a lack of support from working women and she goes on to identify most of the women as 'left-leaning'.<sup>162</sup> WIL supported the demands of industrial women for protective legislation, arguing that it 'would be wrong for an organisation composed largely of non-industrial women to oppose the expressed views of organised women on this point'.<sup>163</sup> Similarly, Sheepshanks argued that 'the question of protective legislation must be left to the organized women to decide and not be interfered with by ladies of the leisure class'.<sup>164</sup> Thus, it seems as if WIL's connections with the labour movement and its policy to leave the question of protective legislation to those it affected culminated in its support for special measures for working women.

Nevertheless, it would be too much of a generalisation to claim that WIL wholeheartedly supported protective measures for working women. Similarly, Ulla Wikander has argued that it is erroneous to assume that socialists supported protection, whereas bourgeois feminists opposed such measures, as 'the two lines were not always

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<sup>160</sup> WIL, *Annual Council Meeting*, 30–31 October 1919, p. 14. WILPF, Series III, Reel 68.

<sup>161</sup> Oldfield, *This Working-Day World*, p. 89.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 91.

<sup>163</sup> WIL, 'Proposal of the British Section, Equal Status of Women', *Ninth International Congress, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia*, 25–31 July 1937. WILPF, I:D, Reel 21.

<sup>164</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (January 1930), p. 3.



clearly separated'.<sup>165</sup> A number of WIL members vehemently opposed protective measures. For instance, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence claimed that after the success of equal franchise in 1928 she returned to her 'first love – concern for the economic and social advancement of the people who do the heavy and arduous work of the world'.<sup>166</sup> During the interwar years – alongside her work with WIL – she served on the Executive Committee of the Open Door Council (ODC) and was Vice President of the Six Point Group. The Six Point Group (SPG) was founded in 1921 by former suffragette, Lady Rhondda to campaign for legal equality between men and women; in particular the SPG was active in lobbying the League of Nations for the adoption of the Equal Rights Treaty. Feminist writers Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby were also prominent members of the organisation and in 1933, they were both also selected as Vice Presidents of WIL. The SPG objected to the distinction between men and women in protective legislation as 'it denies them the status of fully responsible adult citizens'.<sup>167</sup>

In 1926, members of the SPG founded the Open Door Council to campaign for the economic emancipation of the woman worker. Chrystal Macmillan was President of the Council's international sister: Open Door International (ODI), formed in 1929. ODI took an 'uncompromising stand against protective legislation'.<sup>168</sup> Even in relation to the debate over maternity provision for women, ODI argued that 'so-called "protective" measures restricting the liberty of the mother, or imposing special obligations on the employer, do not really protect'.<sup>169</sup> The association believed that protective measures threatened the freedom and interests of women and that obligation on employers to provide maternity benefits would result in lower wages or unemployment for women. Alternatively, it

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<sup>165</sup> Wikander, 'Demands on the ILO by Internationally Organized Women in 1919', p. 70.

<sup>166</sup> Pethick Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World*, p. 336.

<sup>167</sup> Six Point Group, *The "Protection" of Industrial Women*, (c.1926), p. 11. TWL@LSE, 7AMP/F/09/01.

<sup>168</sup> Miller, "'Geneva—the Key to Equality'", p. 224.

<sup>169</sup> ODI, 'Policy of the Open Door International with regard to maternity for submission to the Fourth Conference of the Open Door International, Copenhagen, 1935', p. 1. WILPF, IV, Reel 110.

asserted that maternity ‘should be assimilated in law, with regard to benefits provided, to incapacity to work ... due to accident or to illness’.<sup>170</sup> For feminists in ODI, equality should ‘remove all legal distinctions based on sex’.<sup>171</sup> Evidently, some members of WIL – such as, Macmillan and Pethick Lawrence – opposed protective legislation and defined equality as parity between men and women. Alternatively, other WIL members – such as, Sheepshanks, Royden and Courtney, who were also members of NUSEC – followed the ‘new’ feminist line and campaigned for women’s rights as women rather than equality on men’s terms.<sup>172</sup>

Susan Zimmermann asserts that ‘legal equality feminists gained ground internationally’ through the ODI and the ERI.<sup>173</sup> However, Nitza Berkovitch notes that organisations that campaigned for equal rights with men only made up a small part of the women’s movement. She claims that the majority of organisations adopted a programme that focused on broader social improvement.<sup>174</sup> Moreover, ERI folded in 1934 as, according to Julie Gottlieb, the ‘feminist internationalist market was saturated’.<sup>175</sup> Similarly, Pugh records that the equal rights tradition of British feminism dwindled from the late 1920s, noting that the Women’s Freedom League and the SPG struggled to raise funds.<sup>176</sup> Nevertheless, the vigour of the debates over protective legislation within the British and international women’s movements – which led to the formation of new women’s organisations – demonstrates the vibrancy and radicalism of the movement.

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<sup>170</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>171</sup> ODI, Statement of the views and desiderata of the Open Door International for the Economic Emancipation of the Woman Worker on the whole status of women and equality of rights for both sexes for submission to the 16<sup>th</sup> Assembly of the League of Nations, 1935. WILPF, IV, Reel 110.

<sup>172</sup> Pugh, *Women and the Women’s Movement in Britain since 1914*, p. 197.

<sup>173</sup> Zimmermann, ‘Liaison Committees’, p. 5.

<sup>174</sup> Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship*, p. 61.

<sup>175</sup> Gottlieb, ‘*Guilty Women*’, p. 22.

<sup>176</sup> Pugh, *Women and the Women’s Movement in Britain since 1914*, p. 200.

Although members of WILPF differed in their response to the protective legislation debate, the association remained intact. Rupp argues that feminism during the 1920s and 1930s was dynamic. She explains how ‘feminists with conflicting interests and ideas [were] able to talk across their differences’.<sup>177</sup> Despite the complexities and nuances of the debate, feminists sought to promote women as workers, whether through ‘equality’ or ‘difference’. Furthermore, the transnational nature of both the debates and campaigns for the nationality of married women and protective legislation demonstrates how activists directed their campaigns at the international political sphere. Women’s organisations, including WIL, believed that the status of women should be addressed at the International Labour Organisation and the League of Nations.

### **Women’s organisations and the League of Nations**

Although WILPF was disappointed that the League reinforced the old balance of power, it welcomed ‘the international recognition of women’ within the proposals for the League of Nations drawn up at the end of the Great War.<sup>178</sup> Catherine Marshall stated that

The W.I.L. should, through its International Bureau and its National Sections, use every opportunity afforded by the League of Nations, and by any other International Organization—political, industrial, or cultural—for promoting our aims and realising our programme.<sup>179</sup>

Article 7 of the Covenant of the League of Nations ensured that ‘all positions under or in connection with the League, including the Secretariat, shall be open equally to men and women’.<sup>180</sup> However, women remained in peripheral roles in connection to the League and few nations selected women as representatives to League Assemblies – the most notable

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<sup>177</sup> Rupp and Taylor, ‘Forging Feminist Identity’, p. 365.

<sup>178</sup> WILPF, *International Congress of Women held at Zurich, Resolutions* (1919), p. 21. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>179</sup> Catherine Marshall, ‘The League of Nations: Our relation to it’, *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, Jul 10–17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 63. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>180</sup> League of Nations, ‘The Covenant of the League of Nations’, *Official Journal* (February 1920), p.5.

exception being Rachel Crowdy, chief of the League's Social Section from 1921. The notable absence of women led Bussey and Tims to contend that 'women's voice was no more than a whisper in the assembly of nations' throughout the period.<sup>181</sup> In 1920, the first Assembly of the League of Nations opened with only three women representatives present, including Danish WILPF member Henni Forchhammer. In 1924, the British government selected WIL's Chair, Helena Swanwick, as a substitute delegate to the Assembly. At the Tenth Assembly, held in 1929, fifteen women attended as delegates.<sup>182</sup> Although women were under-represented at the League, a small group of women were chosen as national delegates, rapporteurs and assessors. International women's organisations also lobbied the League on a range of issues.

WILPF set up its international headquarters, known as Maison Internationale, in Geneva in 1920 to be close to the seat of the League of Nations and the range of international organisations also based in the Swiss city. Interwar feminists challenged the notion that the status of women was a national issue and lobbied the League for equality.<sup>183</sup> Similarly, Susan Pedersen has explored the work of women within the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations, arguing that 'there was a natural affinity, the Covenant implied, between the work of international government and 'women's work' of social uplift and social reform'.<sup>184</sup> Despite League positions being formally open to women, the League of Nations continued to be male-dominated, thus international women's organisations urged for the equal representation of women in international politics.<sup>185</sup> Rupp argues that 'at the very least the League of Nations would not have been the same place

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<sup>181</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 73.

<sup>182</sup> Paula F. Pfeffer, "'A Whisper in the Assembly of Nations'" United States' Participation in the International Movement for Women's Rights from the League of Nations to the United Nations', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 8:5 (1985), p. 464.

<sup>183</sup> Miller, "'Geneva—the Key to Equality'", p. 219.

<sup>184</sup> Pedersen, 'Metaphors of the Schoolroom', p. 190.

<sup>185</sup> Goodman, 'International Citizenship and the International Federation of University Women', p. 701.

without the insistent lobbying of organized women'.<sup>186</sup> The persistent pressure from international women's organisations culminated in the inclusion of the status of women on the agenda of the League Assembly in 1935.

### ***Women at the League of Nations***

Traditional accounts of the League assert that it failed to prevent conflict and concentrate on the escalating international crises of the 1930s that culminated in the outbreak of the Second World War.<sup>187</sup> However, Pedersen has noted that recent interest in the League's humanitarian work reveals some areas of the League's success and the influence of voluntary organisations at Geneva.<sup>188</sup> The work of the Permanent Mandates Commission, the Advisory Committee of Traffic of Women and Children, and the High Commission for Refugees were three areas where the League made effective progress.<sup>189</sup> International women's organisations – including WILPF, IAWSEC and ICW – shared the liberal beliefs that underpinned the foundations of the League of Nations, particularly a belief in progress, democracy, education and international law to secure peace and justice.

Women were often restricted to work in the Fifth Committee, also known as 'La Commission Sentimentale', which dealt with social and humanitarian questions.<sup>190</sup> As mentioned, Rachel Crowdy headed the Social Section – part of the Fifth Committee – from 1920 until 1931. She was the only woman to lead a section of the League, yet unlike male heads whose contracts were extended by eight years; her contract was only extended year

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<sup>186</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 222.

<sup>187</sup> E.H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis, 1919–1939: An Introduction to the Study of International Relations*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1946).

<sup>188</sup> Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations', p. 1108.

<sup>189</sup> Gorman, 'Empire, Internationalism, and the Campaign against the Traffic in Women and Children', p. 193.

<sup>190</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 215.

on year.<sup>191</sup> In the Assembly of the League of Nations, some women were selected as national representatives but often as substitute delegates or technical advisors. In 1920, Anna Wicksell (Sweden) and Kristine Bonnevie (Norway) were chosen as substitute delegates and Henni Forchammer (Denmark) as a technical adviser. Forchammer was the only woman to speak at the first meeting of the Assembly when she addressed the conference on the issue of the traffic of women and children.<sup>192</sup> A member of the Danish and international women's movement, Forchammer was President of the Danish Council of Women, Vice President of ICW and a WILPF member.<sup>193</sup> Nonetheless, the number of women chosen as delegates to the League remained low – in 1938 only six percent of delegates and substitutes were women.<sup>194</sup>

Women's organisations aimed to secure more women in positions at the League. An alliance of British women's organisations founded the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations in 1920 to encourage the government to select women as part of the British delegation to League Assemblies. Led by Oglive Gordon of the ICW, Helen Ward – a member of WIL's Executive Committee – was one of the Vice Presidents of the council. WIL sat on the council alongside organisations such as, the National Council of Women, NUSEC, National Union of Teachers, Women's Freedom League and Young Women's Christian Association.<sup>195</sup> At the international level, a Joint Standing Committee of International Women's Organisations was created in 1925 to promote the appointment of women within the committees of the League of Nations. WILPF was a

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<sup>191</sup> Jessica R Pliley, 'Claims to Protection: The Rise and Fall of Feminist Abolitionism in the League of Nations' Committee on the Traffic in Women and Children, 1919–1936', *Journal of Women's History*, 22:4 (2010), p. 100.

<sup>192</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (February 1921), p. 2.

<sup>193</sup> D.M. Northcroft, *Women at Work in the League of Nations* (London: Page & Pratt Ltd, 1923), p. 6. TWL@LSE, 7AMP/F/8/03.

<sup>194</sup> Carol Miller, 'Lobbying the League: Women's International Organizations and the League of Nations' (PhD Thesis, University of Oxford, 1992), p. 101.

<sup>195</sup> Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations, Letter, 20 March 1929. TWL@LSE, 5ERI/1/A.

member of the Joint Standing Committee alongside ICW, IWSA, World Young Women's Christian Association, World Union of Women for International Concord, International Federation of University Women, International Council of Nurses, World Women's Christian Temperance Union, and Equal Rights International joined in 1930. There was a significant degree of co-operation between women's organisations to promote women's roles within the League. In 1925, women's organisations appointed Eleanor Rathbone an assessor on the Committee on Traffic in Women and Protection of Children. Rathbone contacted women's groups, including WIL, as she was 'anxious to keep closely in touch' with international women's organisations.<sup>196</sup> Similarly, Crowdy fostered networks between national officials and voluntary organisations, and Gabrielle Radziwill – a Lithuanian Princess appointed to the League's Secretariat – had strong links with women's organisations.<sup>197</sup>

WILPF aimed to promote women's position in the League of Nations and support women delegates. In 1929, the association was pleased to report that seven of the fifteen women delegates and technical advisors at the Tenth Assembly were active members of WILPF – including WIL President Helena Swanwick and Agnes Macphail, a Canadian member of WILPF's Executive Committee. The association celebrated that 'the W.I.L. is now finely represented in the work of the League of Nations'. In addition, its headquarters in Geneva enabled the association to begin a 'peaceful penetration of the League of Nations'.<sup>198</sup> WILPF held official functions for female delegates during League Assemblies at Maison Internationale. For example, in September 1926 WILPF co-organised a dinner in honour of the six women delegates to the Seventh Assembly of the League. At this

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<sup>196</sup> Eleanor Rathbone to Dorothy Evans, 30 March 1925. WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>197</sup> Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s*, p. 57; Thomas Richard Davies, 'A "Great Experiment" of the League of Nations Era: International Nongovernmental Organizations, Global Governance, and Democracy Beyond the State', *Global Governance*, 18:4 (2012), p. 408.

<sup>198</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (October 1929), p. 2.

gathering, the Presidents of WILPF, ICW and IAWSEC penned a letter to the governments that had not included any women in their national delegation, urging them to ‘do your utmost to include a woman in your delegation next year’.<sup>199</sup>

As noted previously, Swanwick was a substitute delegate for the British government at the Fifth Assembly. She ‘knew that as a woman, I was predestined for the Fifth Committee’ and was appointed as a rapporteur for refugees, although she was frustrated about the lack of clarity of the role’s function.<sup>200</sup> Similarly, she lamented the ‘enormous pull that the majority of men in public life have over women’ and argued that women needed training and education in order to participate fully in international politics, believing that ‘under equal conditions, women are even better fitted than men for a common-sense and courageous diplomacy’.<sup>201</sup> The President of the League Assembly paid tribute to Swanwick’s ‘work on the Fifth Committee, but also to her sagacity and knowledge of International Politics’. She was also invited to make the final speech in the debate on the Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of International Disputes.<sup>202</sup> At the Tenth League Assembly, Swanwick played a prominent role on the Political Commission. *Pax International* reported that WILPF ‘hearts beat with pride at the easy comprehensive way she did it for she was the match of any man in intellect and power’.<sup>203</sup>

Moreover, Swanwick did not just see herself as a British representative to the League, she considered herself a representative of women and in particular the women’s movement. Before travelling to Geneva in 1924, she consulted the leaders of a number of women’s organisations at WIL’s headquarters in London. Recommendations on a wide range of issues were presented to Swanwick, including resolutions on opium traffic;

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<sup>199</sup> WILPF, ‘The League of Nations’, *Pax International* (April 1926), p. 4.

<sup>200</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 393.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 414.

<sup>202</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: WIL, 1925), p. 3. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>203</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (October 1929), p. 2.



nationality of married women; the position of women in native tribes; the appointment of additional women to the Permanent Mandates Commission and the ILO; the traffic of women and children; the protection of animals; disarmament; and the Treaty of Mutual Assistance. On her return, she reported to WIL members.<sup>204</sup> Thus, members of the women's movement made their influence felt at the League as delegates, substitute delegates and assessors where possible.

### *Lobbying the League of Nations*

In 1920, WILPF aimed 'to make our work known' to the delegates and officials of the First League Assembly by sending memorials on the topics of the allied blockade, protection of women and children, the international commission on marriage laws, the use of colonial troops, the economic situation and the terms of the Mandates.<sup>205</sup> WILPF argued that its lobbying led to the creation of a League Commission to investigate Greek, Armenian and other women and children captive in harems along with the appointment of Anna Bugge-Wicksell to the Permanent Mandates Commission (PMC).<sup>206</sup> Upon Wicksell's death in 1928, Valentine Dannevig — founder of the Norwegian branch of WILPF — was selected to replace her on the PMC. Pedersen notes that Dannevig 'acted as a conduit for a wide range of international feminist concerns about the treatment of women in colonies and Mandates'.<sup>207</sup>

International women's organisations were influential in securing the appointment of at least one woman to the PMC. The governance of occupied territories was one of the most controversial issues at the Paris Peace Conference. A compromise between the allied powers who sought compensations for their losses and those who supported internationalist

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<sup>204</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: WIL, 1925), p. 4. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>205</sup> WILPF, 'Report of the Secretary-Treasurer', *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10–17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 193. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>206</sup> Ibid.

<sup>207</sup> Pedersen, 'Metaphors of the Schoolroom', p. 194.

anti-imperialism resulted in the creation of the Mandates System. Article 22 of the Covenant of the League of Nations outlined that ‘advanced nations’ would administer colonies not yet ready for self-rule. A PMC oversaw and reviewed the administration of the Mandates by the Mandatory powers.<sup>208</sup> WILPF argued that a woman on the commission would ‘voice the special interests of women and children who live in the Mandated Territories’.<sup>209</sup>

The implementation of the Mandates system aimed to maintain peace and avoid the competition that had defined the pre-war imperial system, which mirrored WILPF’s aims for peace. The association believed that rivalry between the imperial powers had played a key role in the outbreak of war in 1914.<sup>210</sup> Nevertheless, the Mandates System also maintained the notion of civilizational hierarchy and assumed that some nations were not ready for self-rule.<sup>211</sup> Interestingly, WILPF’s attitude to the Mandates System evolved over the period as it became clear that the right to national self-determination was not being realised. WILPF’s 1926 international congress outlined the organisation’s view on imperialism and the Mandates System, stating that ‘The W.I.L. is opposed in principle to the possession of colonies and holding of Mandates’.<sup>212</sup> French member, Andrée Jouve suggested that ‘we can demand that instead of concealing a new method of colonization under the name of the Mandates, the League of Nations strive to place all colonies under real and efficacious international control’.<sup>213</sup> In 1935, Swanwick described Mandates as a

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<sup>208</sup> Pedersen, *The Guardians*, pp. 1–2.

<sup>209</sup> Catherine Marshall, ‘The League of Nations: Our relation to it’, *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10–17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 64. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>210</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Second International Congress* (1919), p. 19. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>211</sup> Daniel Gorman, ‘Liberal Internationalism, the League of Nations Union, and the Mandates System’, *Canadian Journal of History*, 40:3 (2005), p. 476; Steiner, *The Lights That Failed*, p. 360.

<sup>212</sup> WILPF, ‘Resolutions on Colonial and Economic Imperialism’, *Report of the Fifth International Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington D.C.: WILPF, 1927). SCPC, WILPF Collection (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>213</sup> Andrée Jouve, ‘Desiderata of the League’, *Report of the Fifth International Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 86. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

‘hypocritical camouflage’ for the old balance of power.<sup>214</sup> The association noted that ‘the Mandates are a very imperfect remedy’ as they maintained the dominant state’s control over territory.<sup>215</sup> WILPF also developed a critique of colonialism during the interwar years, distancing itself from other international women’s organisations in this respect – although the association was influenced by and, at times, restated prevailing notions about empire and race, which is explored further in Chapter Four.<sup>216</sup>

Nonetheless, WIL remained committed to the principle of self-determination and demanded independence for countries under British rule, most notably India.<sup>217</sup> Despite its growing disillusionment with the administration of Mandates, WILPF continued to lobby the League to reform the system to extend and enforce international governance in this field to prevent competition and war. WIL demanded that women’s voices should be heard in every field, especially international relations.<sup>218</sup> The association’s focus on the League’s PMC demonstrates its ability to advocate a feminist critique of international relations.

WILPF also lobbied the League to improve the status of women on more traditional feminist issues. In particular, the international women’s movement was influential in lobbying the League in its campaign against the traffic of women and children. The campaign against the traffic of women and children had its roots in the Victorian campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts. Josephine Butler’s Ladies’ National Association raised the issue of ‘White Slavery’ in the late nineteenth century. The campaign, which highlighted this transnational problem, led to the inclusion of Article 23 (c) in the

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<sup>214</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 266.

<sup>215</sup> WILPF, ‘Remedies for Imperialism’, *Report of the Fifth International Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 91. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>216</sup> Beers, ‘Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism’, p. 213; Antoinette Burton argues that British feminists had a problematic relationship with the Empire: Burton, ‘The Feminist Quest for Identity’, p. 69.

<sup>217</sup> WIL supported ‘the keen desire of all political parties in India for a measure of Self-Government’, WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: WIL, 1925), p. 7. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>218</sup> Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*, p. 180.

Covenant of the League of Nations, outlining that an international agreement was required to tackle the issue.<sup>219</sup> Barbara Metzger describes the League of Nations Conference on the Traffic of Women and Children, held in 1921 in Geneva, as a watershed as it created a forum for government officials and activists.<sup>220</sup> The most significant result of this conference was the establishment of an Advisory Committee on the Traffic of Women and Children (CTW), which advised the League Council and Assembly on the issue.

The CTW – composed of delegates from nine countries and assessors from international non-governmental organisations – met for the first time in 1922. The work of the CTW came under the realm of Crowdy's Social Section, and she corresponded with women's organisations on the issue of trafficking, in particular the British Association for Social and Moral Hygiene.<sup>221</sup> Avril de Sainte-Croix, a Vice President of ICW – who was also known as 'the Josephine Butler of France' for her work on the abolition of state-regulated prostitution – was selected by WILPF and other women's organisations as the representative of the international women's movement to the CTW.<sup>222</sup> The CTW was the only area of the League's work that contained a real representation of women. By 1930, six out of the fourteen government delegates and four of the six assessors were women. Thus, women representatives were able to push a feminist abolitionist agenda on the international stage.<sup>223</sup>

In 1923, the CTW started a systematic investigation of the trafficking problem, presenting its findings to a Committee of Experts in 1926. As a result, the League introduced a Convention of the Suppression of Traffic in Women, which called for the abolition of age-limits, which had been proven ineffectual in the protection of young

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<sup>219</sup> Gorman, 'Empire, Internationalism, and the Campaign against the Traffic in Women and Children', p. 198.

<sup>220</sup> Metzger, 'Towards an International Human Rights Regime', p. 57.

<sup>221</sup> Pliley, 'Claims to Protection', p. 94.

<sup>222</sup> Karen Offen, 'Madame Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix, the Josephine Butler of France', *Women's History Review*, 17:2 (2008), p. 240.

<sup>223</sup> Pliley, 'Claims to Protection', p. 99.

women vulnerable to trafficking.<sup>224</sup> WIL aimed to raise public opinion in favour of suppressing the traffic of women, and supported women's contributions to the CTW.<sup>225</sup> In a report on the 'human side of the League of Nations', Sheepshanks described the work of women on the CTW, writing 'what a sign of the times it is when a woman can appear in the great meeting of the nations and before men of all races and colours denounce the hypocrisy of the apparent respect paid to women'.<sup>226</sup> From 1927, the League of Nations promoted the abolition of state-regulated prostitution to tackle the trafficking issue, thus crossing the boundary between international and domestic affairs. Metzger argues that the League's attempt to combat traffic shows the effect of pressure from transnational movements – in particular, women's organisations – to alter the boundaries of international law.<sup>227</sup>

As demonstrated by the campaign against the traffic of women and children, the League of Nations became a focal point for international women's organisations. In 1922, WILPF reported 'it is very encouraging to find how much influence can often be exerted by just intelligently, disinterestedly and earnestly presenting the cause of justice and humanity to men who have a question in hand'.<sup>228</sup> As such, Offen argues that 'the most impressive' feminist initiative of the 1930s was the movement's success in persuading the League to explore the status of women.<sup>229</sup> In 1935, the League's First Committee, which specialised on constitutional and legal questions, discussed the issue of the nationality of married women. As a result, the League appointed a Committee of Experts to study the Legal Status of Women to examine the status of women in private, public and criminal law worldwide. Similarly, the ILO conducted a parallel study into the employment status of

<sup>224</sup> Metzger, 'Towards an International Human Rights Regime', p. 67.

<sup>225</sup> WILPF, 'The League of Nations', *Pax International* (April 1926), p. 3; Ethel Williams, 'The Report on the Traffic in Women and Children', *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1927), p. 2.

<sup>226</sup> Mary Sheepshanks, 'A Human Side of the League of Nations', *Pax International* (October 1927), p. 3.

<sup>227</sup> Metzger, 'Towards an International Human Rights Regime', p. 73.

<sup>228</sup> WILPF, 'Our League and the Assembly of the League of Nations', *Bulletin* (February 1922), p. 12.

<sup>229</sup> Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 357.

women.<sup>230</sup> WILPF celebrated the inquiry as a historic step in the campaign for women's rights as the League accepted responsibility for the issue of the status of women.<sup>231</sup>

Although the outbreak of war in 1939 disrupted the League's investigation, the survey of the status of women marked an important step towards recognising the transnational nature of women's rights and demonstrates the influence that international women's organisations could have on international government. Moreover, the inquiry laid the groundwork for the 1947 United Nations Status of Women Commission.<sup>232</sup> The inclusion of the status of women on the agenda of the League of Nations and the League's inquiry into the legal position of women across the globe represents a real victory for the international women's movement in the interwar years and demonstrates its vitality.<sup>233</sup> The international arena, particularly the League of Nations, became an important site for feminist activity to create an alternative political space for women.<sup>234</sup>

### Conclusion

Founded by suffragists during the Great War, WIL continued to campaign for women's rights during the interwar years. In her history of WIL, Helen Ward wrote that 'in all things affecting the liberties and status of women, the League [WIL] has recognised a definite responsibility'.<sup>235</sup> A focus on WIL's interwar campaigns for suffrage and the nationality of married women has demonstrated that the association focused on women's right to citizenship.<sup>236</sup> Furthermore, the debates over protective legislation within WILPF and British WIL shed light on the complexities and nuances of interwar feminism, as those whose feminism was based on 'equality' and those who emphasised the 'difference'

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<sup>230</sup> Miller, "Geneva—the Key to Equality", p. 237.

<sup>231</sup> WILPF, 'The Status of Women', *Pax International* (October 1937), p. 6.

<sup>232</sup> Eisenberg, 'The Status of Women', p. 17.

<sup>233</sup> Miller, "Geneva—the Key to Equality", p. 219; Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship*, p. 85.

<sup>234</sup> Sluga, 'Female and National Self-Determination', p. 495.

<sup>235</sup> Ward, *A Venture in Goodwill*, p. 23.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

between male and female experiences continued to work together. The vitality and vibrancy of debates as well as the overlap between WIL and a range of women's organisations demonstrates the pluralism of the interwar women's movement. In addition, the international arena, particularly the League of Nations, opened up a new arena for women. Women's rights were transnational concerns and the movement successfully lobbied the League to include the status of women on its agenda.

Nevertheless, WIL was founded in response to war and was committed to securing a permanent peace. Offen argues that WILPF's 'initially explicit feminist aims' were 'overshadowed by an even more ambitious commitment to ending the use of all violence and force' during the 1920s.<sup>237</sup> However, it is clear that the association did continue to campaign for an improvement in the status of women and lobbied for women to take up prominent roles in the League of Nations. The association was also a key member of co-operative international women's alliances such as the Standing Joint Committee and the Liaison Committee – working with and alongside a range of feminist and women's organisations. WILPF's programme was diverse, which has led some scholars to assume that other commitments eclipsed its interest in women's rights.<sup>238</sup> During the interwar years, it campaigned on a range of issues including disarmament, international law and national self-determination alongside its feminist goals for women's suffrage and the nationality of married women. Examining the campaigns of both the British WIL and international WILPF has situated the association as a key member of the women's movement.

WIL was a section of an international feminist-pacifist association and thus its feminist campaigns ran alongside its goals for peace. Rather than assume that the association neglected its goals to improve the status of women, it is evident that WILPF

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<sup>237</sup> Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 361.

<sup>238</sup> Ibid.; Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914*, p. 201.

believed that women could only ‘come into her full inheritance in a state, or a community life, which is founded not on force but on justice’.<sup>239</sup> Furthermore, even though WIL addressed issues beyond the campaign for women’s rights, it aimed to contribute to international debates on peace, disarmament and the League of Nations as a ‘feminist body to world problems’.<sup>240</sup>

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<sup>239</sup> Clara Ragaz, ‘Address of Welcome’, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>240</sup> Annot Robinson, ‘The League of Nations: Our relation to it’, *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10–17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 63. SCPC, WILPF Collection (DG043), Part II: WILPF International Office, Reel 141.1.



## Chapter Three

### **‘The Saner Sex’: WIL’s Peace Activism, 1919–1935**

Feminist-pacifists formed WIL in response to the Great War. Although the conflict ended in 1918, the organisation expressed ‘deep regret that the Terms of the Peace proposed at Versailles should so seriously violate the principles upon which alone a just and lasting peace can be secured’.<sup>1</sup> The organisation continued its campaign for peace throughout the interwar years. WIL branches studied the causes of war, lobbied the League of Nations, campaigned for disarmament and sought to educate public opinion about the issues of war, peace and international relations. Although WIL shared much in common with the wider peace movement, it represented ‘a specific women’s outlook on war’.<sup>2</sup> By the mid-1930s, however, the peace movement faced significant challenges, as it struggled to grapple with the issues of fascism, appeasement and the growing threat of war.<sup>3</sup> WIL members responded differently to the growing threat of fascism, which has led some scholars to assume that the organisation became fragmented.<sup>4</sup> Nonetheless, during the early 1930s public interest in international affairs was substantial,<sup>5</sup> demonstrated by the widespread support for associations such as the League of Nations Union, the 1934 Peace Ballot, and the election of prominent anti-war members to Parliament, including Ramsay MacDonald.

Nonetheless, the historiography on the peace movement overlooks WIL and women’s peace activism dismissed as insignificant.<sup>6</sup> Despite some attempt to correct the

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<sup>1</sup> WILPF, *International Congress of Women held at Zurich* (1919), p. 18. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>2</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, ‘A Regiment of Women’, *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1920), p. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Cortright, *Peace*, p. 66; Julie V. Gottlieb, ‘Broken Friendships and Vanquished Loyalties: Gender, Collective (In)Security and Anti-Fascism in Britain in the 1930s’, *Politics, Religion and Ideology*, 13:2 (2012), p. 202.

<sup>4</sup> Gottlieb, ‘The Women’s Movement Took the Wrong Turning’, p. 448.

<sup>5</sup> Michael Pugh, ‘Pacifism and Politics in Britain, 1931–1935’, *The Historical Journal*, 23:3 (1980), p. 641.

<sup>6</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, p. 61.

‘denial of women’s peace history’, a study of WIL’s campaigns for peace is still absent.<sup>7</sup> This study builds on growing interest in women’s involvement in international relations, including women’s work in connection with the League of Nations.<sup>8</sup> At WILPF’s 1926 international congress, French member Marcelle Cappy commented that ‘twenty years ago you would not have seen women busying themselves with international affairs’, indicating the progress women made in this area over the period.<sup>9</sup> Thus, an analysis of WIL’s work for peace demonstrates women’s engagement with international politics.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter will examine WIL’s campaigns for peace from 1919 to 1935. During the 1920s, WIL was hopeful that the League of Nations could provide effective international governance and co-operation to prevent war, and women would play a prominent role in the League. The chapter will also analyse WIL’s campaigns – the Peacemakers’ Pilgrimage in 1926 and the Women’s Peace Crusade of 1928 – which mobilised women in the campaign for peace. These mass campaigns were reminiscent of pre-war suffrage demonstrations. They illustrate the trajectory of women’s activism from suffrage to peace and international relations. The chapter will also consider one of WILPF’s most successful campaigns: the women’s petition presented to the World Disarmament Conference in 1932, which collected over six million signatures in support of disarmament. The chapter will conclude by examining the debates over fascism and collective security in the 1930s to expose the differences within WILPF and WIL, which

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<sup>7</sup> Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement*, p. 33; Cortright, *Peace*, p. 19; Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common*, p. 4. Keith Robbins mentions WIL but provides little context on the organisation’s feminist pacifism: Robbins, *The Abolition of War*, p. 96. There is no mention of WIL in Paul Laity’s chapter on the peace movement on the outbreak of the Great War, Paul Laity, *The British Peace Movement, 1870–1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 216–237.

<sup>8</sup> Miller, “‘Geneva—the Key to Equality’”; McCarthy, ‘Democratizing British Foreign Policy’; Ashworth, ‘Feminism, War and the Prospects of Peace’; Glenda Sluga, ‘Gender’ in Patrick Finney ed., *International History* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> Marcelle Cappy, ‘Creative Power of Labour and Women’, *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 70. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>10</sup> Julie Gottlieb focuses on some WIL members in her work on women’s anti-fascism in the 1930s: Gottlieb, ‘The Women’s Movement Took the Wrong Turning’.

centred on the organisation's commitment to 'freedom'. This chapter highlights both the divisions and convergence between feminism and pacifism, demonstrating how British women remained politically active and increasingly concerned with international relations.

### **'We women are pacifists at heart': WIL's pacifism**

The British peace movement changed dramatically at the outbreak of the Great War in 1914. The existing Peace Society failed to organise a coherent pacifist response to the war and a number of new organisations were established. In the early stages of the war, anti-war activists established WIL alongside the anti-militarist Union of Democratic Control (UDC), the internationalist League of Nations Society (LNS), the Christian pacifist Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR) and the No-Conscription Fellowship (NCF).<sup>11</sup> As Ceadel notes, the British peace movement enjoyed unprecedented popularity in the 1920s due to widespread public disillusionment with the aims of the war and a 'never again' attitude.<sup>12</sup> WIL was part of this wider British peace network and shared many aims with other peace organisations. The connections and overlaps between WIL and other members of the peace movement will be explored further in Chapter Five. As argued in Chapter One, WIL created a unique identity for itself within the anti-war movement as a feminist-pacifist organisation, as it linked war and militarism to the oppression of women.

WIL's pacifism was radical and intertwined with its goals for women's rights and internationalism. Although the organisation's aims for equality and peace were not fully realised during the period, WILPF did manage to exert influence in the international sphere and, as a result, the international community recognised its work for peace and disarmament. The Nobel Prize for Peace was awarded to WILPF's first two Presidents – Jane Addams received the award in 1931 and in 1946, Emily Greene Balch was honoured

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<sup>11</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 198; Laity, *The British Peace Movement*, p. 216.

<sup>12</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 187.

with the same accolade.<sup>13</sup> The Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organisations – which WILPF was a prominent member of during the interwar years – was also nominated for the Nobel Prize in 1934. In addition, Rosika Schwimmer – a Hungarian WILPF member – received the World Peace Prize in 1937.<sup>14</sup> Rupp argues that 'the League of Nations would not have been the same place without the insistent lobbying of organized women' and Laura Beers highlights that the United Nations granted WILPF consultative status in 1947, in recognition of the association's contribution to the international sphere.<sup>15</sup>

Scholars of peace movements have identified the diverse influences and origins on pacifist thought and campaigns.<sup>16</sup> The British peace movement included liberal internationalists, socialist anti-militarists, absolute pacifists, Christians and feminists. Similarly, members of WIL were drawn from diverse political backgrounds. For example, socialist anti-militarists such as Sylvia Pankhurst and Ellen Wilkinson were early members of the association. Wilkinson attended WILPF international congresses in Zurich in 1919 and in Prague in 1929.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Maude Royden articulated that 'our own religion compels us to the view that war is wrong'.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, a number of Quaker women entered the women's peace movement via their faith. Edith Pye, a British Quaker and midwife served as an international Co-Chair of WILPF between 1932 and 1934.

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<sup>13</sup> Hicks Stiehm, *Champions for Peace*; Harriet Hyman Alonso, 'Nobel Peace Laureates, Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch: Two Women of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom', *Journal of Women's History*, 7:2 (1995), pp. 6–26.

<sup>14</sup> Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations, Circular Letter, 12 January 1934. SCPC, Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations, CDG-B Switzerland; International Committee for World Peace Prize, 10 February 1937. SCPC, Rosika Schwimmer, CDG-A, Box 1.

<sup>15</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 222; Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist International', p. 217.

<sup>16</sup> Brock and Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century*; Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*; Laity, *The British Peace Movement*, p. 9; Eglin, 'Women Pacifists in Interwar Britain', p. 149.

<sup>17</sup> WIL, The British Delegation to the International Congress (1919). WILPF, I:D, Reel 17; WILPF, *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Prague, 24 to 28 August 1929* (Geneva: WILPF, 1929), p. 10. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II, Reel 141.2.

<sup>18</sup> Sue Morgan, 'A "Feminist Conspiracy": Maude Royden, Women's Ministry and the British Press, 1916–1921', *Women's History Review*, 22:5 (2013), p. 777; Maude Royden, *The Peace Army, letter to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations*, 25 February 1932. TWL@LSE, 7AMR/1/82.

As noted in Chapter Two, many WIL members had been active in the movement for women's suffrage before 1914, including prominent members of the NUWSS such as Kathleen Courtney, Isabella Ford, Helena Swanwick and Chrystal Macmillan. Thus, members came from diverse and varied political backgrounds. In addition, many members were also active in other peace organisations. Swanwick was the only woman on the UDC's Executive Committee, Catherine Marshall led the NCF during the war and Maude Royden was active in FOR. Nonetheless, WIL believed its role as a women's peace organisation was distinctive and it continued its activism throughout the interwar years, advocating that women should play a role in international politics. In 1919, WIL considered whether it was necessary to continue its activism after the conclusion of the Great War and the extension of the franchise in 1918. Swanwick argued that no organisation 'makes just the connection that we do between feminism and the abolition of war'.<sup>19</sup> Filling a gap in both the women's and peace movements, WIL remained active throughout the period.

Feminist pacifism was at the very heart of WIL. In the discourse adopted by its members, women's experience of war meant they had much to offer in the sphere of peace-making.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, they asserted that in a peaceful society women would enjoy greater freedom and equality with men.<sup>21</sup> As Paul Laity suggests, the 'tension between the wish to avoid war and the desire to achieve justice is one of the central themes of any peace movement'.<sup>22</sup> This tension is also apparent in WIL as it negotiated its commitment to peace and freedom. It is worth recalling the distinction between 'pacifism' and 'pacificism'. The former is the belief that all war is wrong, the latter asserts that war is sometimes necessary

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<sup>19</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, 'A Regiment of Women', *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1920), p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> See pp. 64–65.

<sup>21</sup> See p. 67.

<sup>22</sup> Laity, *The British Peace Movement*, p. 9.

to protect democracy.<sup>23</sup> During the 1920s, the peace movement enjoyed a sense of unity and the differences between pacifists and pacificists were, on the whole, subsumed. Peace activists shared disillusionment with the stated aims of the Great War and were generally optimistic that the League of Nations would herald an era of international peace. WIL included both pacifists and pacificist members. Previous experiences and engagement with different forms of activism shaped the ‘pacifism’ of its leading members. While WIL was able to incorporate diversity of thought, divergences opened up in the mid-1930s based on the concept of peace.

For instance, Maude Royden’s pacifism was derived from her Christian faith.<sup>24</sup> A lobbyist for the ordination of women, peace was often the focus of her sermons. For Royden, the campaign for peace was part of her mission to ‘bring about the Kingdom of God on earth’.<sup>25</sup> During the Great War, she likened her radical calls for disarmament to Christ’s Sermon on the Mount.<sup>26</sup> In her 1936 Armistice address, published by the LNU, she called on activists to ‘compare the history of Christianity itself with that of this part of it – the coming of Peace – that we are trying to achieve now’, demonstrating how closely bound her faith and pacifism were. An ardent supporter of the League of Nations, Royden asserted that League’s Covenant enshrined ‘the idea of the Kingdom of God on earth, realised internationally’. Royden articulated her commitment to internationalism in terms of family and brotherhood, ‘united in the Fatherhood of God’.<sup>27</sup> Royden’s Christian pacifism led her to work with the Fellowship of Reconciliation and Peace Pledge Union, and she optimistically clung to pacifist ideals until September 1939.

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<sup>23</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Morgan, ‘A Feminist Conspiracy’, p. 781.

<sup>25</sup> Dr. A. Maude Royden, ‘Armistice Sermon Notes’ (League of Nations Union: 1936), p. 1. TWL@LSE, 7AMR/2.

<sup>26</sup> A. Maude Royden, *The Great Adventure* (London: Fellowship of Reconciliation, 1915), p. 7. TWL@LSE, 7AMR/2.

<sup>27</sup> Royden, ‘Armistice Sermon Notes’, p. 3.

During their time at Oxford University, Royden and Kathleen Courtney became close friends. Unlike Royden, her support for peace was not based on Christian ideals but a commitment to international co-operation, perhaps inspired by her early cross-cultural experiences; as a young woman, she attended an Anglo-French College in Kensington before studying German in Dresden. During the war, she worked with the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee in Salonika and Corsica. She also provided relief in Vienna following the war and continued to travel widely during the interwar years.<sup>28</sup> These transformative experiences shaped Courtney's support for peace, which took a more practical form. Courtney was a pacifist internationalist, who focused her efforts in the 1930s on international relations and disarmament. Speaking on a Columbia Broadcasting System radio show in January 1935, she asserted that 'the only cure of war will be the construction of peace – the building of world community'.<sup>29</sup> Courtney's support for internationalism led to her taking a leading role in the Disarmament Conference of 1932 and on the Executive of the League of Nations Union during the 1930s, as she became frustrated with the absolute pacifism of WIL.<sup>30</sup>

By contrast, Swanwick distanced herself from WIL as her disillusionment with the League of Nations grew during the latter half of the 1930s. Claiming to have 'never "preached peace"; peace in a vacuum; peace as an abstraction',<sup>31</sup> she upheld an absolutist belief in peace as a method and objected to the use of sanctions against an aggressor.<sup>32</sup> Swanwick continued to believe that peace could be achieved through the 'solidarity of

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<sup>28</sup> Janet E. Grenier, 'Courtney, Dame Kathleen D'Olier (1878–1974)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>29</sup> Kathleen D. Courtney, Notes for Columbia Broadcasting System, 24 January 1935. TWL@LSE, 7KDC/B/2.

<sup>30</sup> McCarthy, *British People and the League of Nations*, p. 189.

<sup>31</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 436.

<sup>32</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, *Collective Insecurity* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1937).

people’, despite accusations of ‘isolationism’.<sup>33</sup> Rebuking this claim, Swanwick asserted that ‘we are not negative; we oppose war sanctions because we are actively peace-makers’.<sup>34</sup> Swanwick questioned the concept of national security, claiming that ‘defence has meant and still means for many minds, the manipulation of the balance of power in our favour’.<sup>35</sup> Although her published work continued to influence WIL, she resigned her position in the association and retreated from public work in the 1930s, taking her own life shortly following the outbreak of war in 1939.<sup>36</sup>

As a result, Julie Gottlieb assumes that a division opened up within the association and claims that Courtney’s resignation as WIL’s President in 1933 was based on her frustration with the pacifism of the association; in particular, its unrealistic disarmament aims.<sup>37</sup> Yet, Courtney’s departure was also due in large part to the tensions between WIL and WILPF over the structure and nature of the relationship between international headquarters and national sections, which will be explored in Chapter Four.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, the choice between pacifism and pacificism when faced with rising fascism in Europe was a difficult one for WIL members. WIL opposed militarism as a threat to justice and freedom; however, fascism also presented a menace to freedom. In 1934, after hearing news from Nazi Germany, including the ‘senseless persecution of the Jews and of the political opponents of the regime’, the association stated that

national government must be based on the equal right of every citizen to liberty and happiness and to equality before the law and that this principle of democracy must find its

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<sup>33</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, *Pooled Security: What Does it Mean? (A reply to some critics of “New Wars for Old”)* (London: WIL, 1934), p. 9.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 499; ‘Tragic Death of a Fighter for Peace’, *Manchester City News*, 25 November 1939

<sup>37</sup> Gottlieb, ‘The Women’s Movement Took the Wrong Turning’, p. 452.

<sup>38</sup> At times, the British section had a tense relationship with WILPF Executive due to differences of opinion. This is explored further in Chapter Four. WIL, ‘Resignation of Miss Courtney’, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1933), p. 1.



equivalent in the international sphere, will be our best weapon, whether defence or of aggression, against the encroachments of belief in violence.<sup>39</sup>

WIL's continued faith in the League of Nations to secure peace was mirrored in the mass campaign and the outcomes of the Peace Ballot, 1934–5. Led by the LNU, the Ballot demonstrated popular support for the League and disarmament. Collecting the views of thirty eight percent of the British population, the campaign also involved the participation of a number of women's organisations, including WIL.<sup>40</sup> Nonetheless, after 1936 it became clear that, in reality, collective security entailed competitive armaments and the consensus displayed by the Ballot broke down.<sup>41</sup> As this study ends in 1935, it will analyse the differences in opinion over collective security and sanctions as they emerged in the mid-1930s.

The association linked peace to justice, freedom and equality. In her speech to the 1919 congress, Swanwick articulated that 'peace is an active quality, peace is not a negative thing. Peace is not a mere denial of war. Peace is the readiness to use your brains and your goodwill to solve every problem as it arises'.<sup>42</sup> Thus, WIL did more than simply cry peace, it campaigned for international law, disarmament, equality and justice, as well as protesting conflicts that arose during the period. WIL's *Monthly News Sheet* described the Polish invasion of Russia and ensuing Polish-Soviet War (1919–1921) as 'an "acid test" of the League of Nations'. The association argued that the crisis highlighted the failings of the League, primarily that its membership was not open to all nations. Russia was notably absent from the League.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1934), p. 1.

<sup>40</sup> McCarthy, 'Leading from the Centre', p. 529; Martin Ceadel, 'The First British Referendum: The Peace Ballot, 1934–5', *English Historical Review*, 95 (1980), p. 835.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, 'Evening Speech', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>43</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1920), p. 1.

WIL – feeling ‘a special international responsibility to inform itself of how the nations within the British Empire are being treated’ – was particularly concerned with conflict in Ireland and worked with the Irishwomen’s International League to protest against the British government’s conduct during the Irish War for Independence (1919–1921).<sup>44</sup> Manchester WIL sent a mission of women to Ireland to investigate and report on conditions, particularly the tales of atrocities committed by the ‘Black and Tans’, or the Royal Irish Constabulary. The WIL mission advocated the liberation of political prisoners, a truce and the withdrawal of armed forces, arguing that Irish elected bodies should have the authority to maintain order.<sup>45</sup> WIL opposed the ‘cowardly and cruel and dishonest policy of militarist domination in Ireland’.<sup>46</sup> WIL’s work to highlight the brutality in Ireland demonstrates, as Jon Lawrence has noted, that there were widespread fears about the violent legacy of the Great War. Furthermore, he suggests that opposition to such violence in Ireland contributed to a reworking of the pre-war myth of Britain as a ‘peaceable kingdom’.<sup>47</sup> Although he does not focus on WIL’s efforts, the association’s work helped to highlight the situation in Ireland to a previously desensitized and unconcerned British public, which became increasingly hostile to state policy towards Ireland from 1921.

In response to Japan’s occupation of Manchuria in 1931, WILPF urged the League of Nations to bring the Sino–Japanese conflict to a peaceful settlement and called on the Foreign Ministers of China and Japan to withdraw their troops. Moreover, women’s organisations in China and Japan exchanged messages with WILPF, demonstrating ‘the intense desire on their part for a peaceful settlement of the Manchurian problem through

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<sup>44</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1920), p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> WIL, Council Meeting Agenda, 14–15 October 1920, p. 2. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>46</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1920), p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Jon Lawrence, ‘Forging a Peaceable Kingdom: War, Violence, and Fear of Brutalization in Post-First World War Britain’, *The Journal of Modern History*, 75 (2003), pp. 576–89.

the League of Nations'.<sup>48</sup> WIL also highlighted that Japan had broken the terms of the Covenant of the League and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, calling on members of the League to sever diplomatic, financial and economic relations with Japan if it continued military measures.<sup>49</sup> WIL continued to object to wars as they broke out. As such, the Manchester branch put forward a resolution at WIL's Council meeting in October 1920 to allow for stronger local WIL action when crises occurred, such as the Polish-Soviet War and the Irish conflict.<sup>50</sup>

WIL's peace activism, however, was not just a reactive form of protest when conflicts and crises arose. The association lobbied for constructive long-term solutions to secure lasting peace. Laity argues that 'peace, unlike the causes of most other pressure groups, was inherently international'.<sup>51</sup> Similarly, in her report of the 1915 Hague congress, Hobhouse asserted that peace organisations were 'inadequate unless they could find international expression'.<sup>52</sup> The association was committed to international co-operation through the League to prevent war. Moreover, the association organised women across the globe for the principles of peace. In response to increasing nationalism and the growing threat of fascism in Europe, the association articulated its aim to 'get the women of all countries to think internationally'.<sup>53</sup> Another of WILPF's main strategies for securing peace was through educational measures, 'to press the importance of educating the new generation on constructive and not destructive lines'.<sup>54</sup> The association aimed to transform

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<sup>48</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1931), pp. 1–2.

<sup>49</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1932), p. 4.

<sup>50</sup> WIL, Council Meeting Agenda, 14–15 October 1920, p. 2. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>51</sup> Laity, *The British Peace Movement*, p. 4.

<sup>52</sup> Emily Hobhouse, 'Foreword', *Bericht–Rapport–Report*, (Amsterdam: ICWPP, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>53</sup> Camille Drevet, 'Report on the Mission to Eastern Europe and to the Balkans', *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 21. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>54</sup> WILPF, 'Resolutions', *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

public opinion to create a peaceful society. Thus, WILPF produced propaganda, held mass meetings and summer schools on the themes of peace, disarmament and international relations. WIL also produced a bibliography of books that encouraged the teaching of history on international lines.<sup>55</sup>

Ceadel argues that in 1933 – the year Hitler became Chancellor of Germany – pacifists realised that they had spent too long ‘indulging their hatred of war when they should have been analysing its cause’.<sup>56</sup> However, he overlooks WIL’s long-standing commitment to understanding the causes of war and foreign relations. For example, the British branch organised a group study of foreign policies of different countries, which involved volunteers researching the policies of one country and reporting to WIL meetings for general discussion.<sup>57</sup> Moreover, the organisation studied the multifarious causes of war, realising that there were economic, political and moral factors underlying conflict and militarism. Discussions on the causes of war at international congresses identified trade tariffs, imperialism, and competition in armaments amongst the principal causes of war. In 1924, WIL member Ethel Williams addressed WILPF’s congress in Washington D.C. claiming that ‘war is only one of many manifestations of one cause – social inequality’.<sup>58</sup> Thus, the association’s pacifism was connected to its wider campaign for equality, particularly for women.

Feminism was an integral aspect of WILPF’s pacifism. The association promoted a gendered peace based on the equality of men and women, and advocated the inclusion of

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<sup>55</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1919), p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, p. 148.

<sup>57</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (February 1925), p. 3.

<sup>58</sup> Ethel Williams, ‘Political Aspects of a New International Order’, *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1924), p. 50. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

women in conflict resolution.<sup>59</sup> At WILPF's 1924 international congress, Swanwick articulated WIL's belief that 'women's great function intellectually was to be interpreters. Men have not succeeded in understanding each other'.<sup>60</sup> Thus, she promoted a role for women in conciliation and arbitration processes to secure peace. WIL was committed to the principle of arbitration 'in its wider and popular, rather than in its purely technical sense, as meaning judgement of reason in place of decision by force, in all international disputes'.<sup>61</sup> Similarly, WILPF lobbied for a reform of the peace treaties to create a more sustainable peace based on international co-operation. Aletta Jacobs argued that women should assist in the revision of the treaty, claiming that 'if the women understand what the terms of the Peace Treaty mean to the world, and if they will use their combined power, I believe a revision of the Peace Treaties could be accomplished'.<sup>62</sup> Although Offen argues that the issue of peace overshadowed WILPF's feminist goals during the interwar years, it is evident that the association promoted a feminist critique of war and international relations. Equality was inherently linked to peace and for WILPF 'one thing is undeniable, that is that woman can only come into her full inheritance in a state, or community life, which is founded not on force but on justice'.<sup>63</sup>

### 1920s: A decade of hope?

The British peace movement – including WIL – hoped that the Great War had indeed been the war to end all wars and lobbied government to take further steps towards international

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<sup>59</sup> Ingrid Sharp, 'Feminist Peace Activism 1915 and 2010: Are We Nearly There Yet?', *Peace and Change*, 38:2 (2013), p. 156.

<sup>60</sup> Helena Swanwick, 'Conciliation and Arbitration', *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 65. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>61</sup> WIL, 'Complete British Report on Arbitration', *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 116. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>62</sup> Aletta Jacobs, 'Revision of the Peace Treaties', *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10 to 17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 86. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>63</sup> WILPF, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

interdependence, arbitration and disarmament to maintain peace. Nonetheless, WILPF argued that the peace treaty would ‘only lead to future wars’ and campaigned during the early 1920s for its revision.<sup>64</sup> The association criticised the Treaty of Versailles – or ‘peace to end peace’ as they called it – claiming it was ‘not an instrument of peace, but one of war’.<sup>65</sup> WILPF also asserted that the Covenant of the League of Nations ‘maintains the old discredited system of the balance of power’; Germany remained outside the League until 1926.<sup>66</sup>

By April 1920, WILPF was discussing the prospect of revising the peace treaty. The association studied the problems that they had identified with the treaty and highlighted particular areas of concern in the aftermath of the Great War – including the conscription of African troops by colonial powers; massacres in Armenia; the isolation of Russia; famine in Central Europe; and the disillusionment of the USA, as the nation distanced itself from European affairs.<sup>67</sup> Catherine Marshall, WIL’s vice-chair, studied the League’s structure carefully. She supported the attempts the Covenant had made towards creating a system of international law and argued that WILPF ‘have got to compare the League not to the one we would like but with the world as it would be without it’.<sup>68</sup> WIL held lectures on the peace treaties – including on the ‘Economic Effects of the Peace Treaty’ – and reported on debates about the settlement that took place in the House of Commons.<sup>69</sup> WIL blamed the government for not accepting its proper role and

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<sup>64</sup> Ethel Snowden, ‘Tuesday Morning Session’, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920), p. 21. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>65</sup> WILPF, *Pax et Libertas* (April 1920), p. 1; WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (February 1920), p. 1.

<sup>66</sup> WILPF, ‘Resolution on the League of Nations’, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920), p. 21. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>67</sup> WILPF, *Pax et Libertas* (April 1920) p. 1.

<sup>68</sup> Catherine Marshall, ‘League of Nations: our relation to it’, *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10 to 17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 67. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>69</sup> WILPF, *Pax et Libertas* (April 1920), p. 3.

responsibility in the problems of Europe, which it argued were ‘not merely the fault of the war: they are the fault of the peace’.<sup>70</sup>

In 1922, WILPF held a special conference at The Hague on the theme of ‘A New Peace’. The conference, which included representatives of 110 national and international organisations from twenty countries, claimed to represent twenty million people and called for a World Congress to establish the basis of a new peace. In particular, WILPF argued that women ‘as that of citizens in possession of the vote, their will must, more so than in 1915, weigh in the balance’.<sup>71</sup> The association believed that women should play a role in the negotiations as they had a unique and valuable understanding of world peace. The 1922 conference criticised the Versailles Treaty for not adhering to President Wilson’s Fourteen Points or maintaining the ‘spirit of the League of Nations’. Additionally, WILPF argued that the treaty prevented economic reconstruction on an internationally co-operative basis, made disarmament difficult and prohibited the League of Nations from becoming a ‘universal, democratic and fully effective’ body.<sup>72</sup> ‘Messengers of peace’ carried the resolutions produced at the 1922 Hague conference to European heads of state. Jane Addams and Catherine Marshall travelled across Europe with Belgian WILPF member, Jeanne Mélin, calling on politicians and government officials to initiate a revision of the Treaty of Versailles, but to no avail.<sup>73</sup>

The form of the League of Nations concerned WILPF. The League was not a truly universal international body. Notably, Germany, Hungary and Russia were excluded from the League and the United States chose not to join. The absence of the USA from the League became a major concern for WILPF. The US section, however, was divided over

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<sup>70</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1920), p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> WILPF, *Bulletin* (October–December 1922), p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>73</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (February 1923), p. 4.

the issue of America's entry to the League.<sup>74</sup> WILPF held its fourth international congress in Washington D.C in 1924, under the theme of a 'New International Order'. Delegates at the congress stressed the value of international co-operation, arguing that 'the United States have not only a great deal to give to Europe, but that they too need Europe'.<sup>75</sup> The British delegation was troubled by the absence of the US from the League of Nations. In March 1924, WIL held a one-day public symposium to discuss 'America and a World League' to discuss the proposals and difficulties about America and international co-operation.<sup>76</sup> Although the US did not become a member-state of the League of Nations, WILPF was more hopeful for the future of the League following the admission of Germany in 1926.

In a speech to WILPF's 1919 congress, Swanwick lambasted the Covenant of the League of Nations. In particular, she asserted that the authors of the Covenant had created the League for 'the exploitation and oppression of Germany'.<sup>77</sup> She went on to stress that WILPF's role was to rouse public opinion to take an interest in the League of Nations as the 'League of the Peoples must be made by the Peoples and kept by the Peoples'.<sup>78</sup> The British section aimed to raise positive attitudes towards Germany and promote its inclusion in the League. In the immediate aftermath of the Great War, WIL responded to a call for help from its feminist colleagues in famine-stricken Germany and Austria. The association coordinated a gendered campaign that aimed to reconstruct relations between the women of former enemy nations.

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<sup>74</sup> WILPF, 'Section for the United States', *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10 to 17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>75</sup> Lotte Heller, 'Political Aspects of a New International Order', *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1924), p. 50. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>76</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (February 1924), p. 3.

<sup>77</sup> Helena Swanwick, 'Democracy and the League of Nations', *Towards Peace and Freedom* (August 1919), p. 14. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*



In 1919, reports reached Britain of famine in Central Europe caused by the allied blockade. WIL responded by raising funds to send rubber teats to German women who were struggling to feed their babies. The rubber teat campaign was a highly gendered operation that aimed to provide practical and moral support for ‘enemy’ women in relation to their maternal roles. WIL worked with the Red Cross in Britain and Frankfurt to distribute teats in Germany, which they sent with ‘a message of goodwill from the senders to their German sisters’.<sup>79</sup> The blockade became a central concern for WIL in the immediate aftermath of the war, particularly its impact on children. WIL worked with the Fight the Famine Council and the Save the Children Fund, established in the aftermath of the Great War to provide relief and to lobby government to raise the blockade. The connections between WIL and these humanitarian societies will be explored further in Chapter Five but it is important to note here the connection between WIL’s pacifism and its humanitarian concerns. Ethel Williams visited Vienna in 1919 to report on the famine for WIL’s publication *Towards a Permanent Peace*. She condemned the allied blockade as it caused malnutrition and rickets amongst children in the city, urging the British government to ‘remember that such warfare is directed against children’.<sup>80</sup>

By May 1919, WIL had raised enough money to send one million teats to Germany.<sup>81</sup> Although WIL was not a humanitarian organisation and did not usually provide assistance – preferring to focus on educative and political work to secure peace – the rubber teat campaign was celebrated as opening up ‘visions of love breaking down the barriers of hate, in the name of a common humanity – on the threshold of a new world’.<sup>82</sup>

In her autobiography, Swanwick argued that although it was tempting to break off into

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<sup>79</sup> WILPF, ‘National Section Report – Great Britain’ *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>80</sup> Ethel Williams, ‘A Visit to Vienna’, *Towards Peace and Freedom* (August 1919), p. 10. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>81</sup> WILPF, ‘National Section Report – Great Britain’, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>82</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (February 1919), p. 3.

relief work, it was necessary for WIL to remain focused on educative work, writing ‘if we abandoned that, we should indeed be surrendering to the age-old notion that women had no concern in public life except to wipe up the mess made by men’.<sup>83</sup> WIL’s rubber-teat campaign shows a concerted attempt to provide practical support for Germany and bridge the divide between the two belligerent nations, through a gendered campaign. WIL’s woman-centred vision of reconciliation aimed to create a sense of solidarity between British and German women and overcome wartime anti-German sentiment.

In the 1920s, WILPF was also hopeful about the success of non-violent methods of conflict resolution. At its third international congress held in Vienna in 1921, WILPF members discussed methods of ‘pacifism in practice’. WILPF committed itself to studying the ‘methods of passive resistance’.<sup>84</sup> The discussion focused on the passive resistance techniques of Mahatma Gandhi and his followers in their opposition to British rule in India. Gandhi’s methods inspired many WILPF members and *Pax International* published extracts from his memoirs – *My Experiments with Truth* – in 1926.<sup>85</sup> The discussion on passive resistance also included the issue of Irish self-determination. WILPF criticised the ‘virus of militarism’ that swept through Europe in 1914 which, it argued, had transformed the peaceful Irish campaign for self-determination into the chaotic violence seen during the 1916 Easter Rising. WILPF asserted that continued Irish passive resistance could have been ‘extraordinarily successful’ in appealing to the sympathy of other nations and ‘the best elements of the British Empire’.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 315.

<sup>84</sup> WILPF, ‘Pacifism in Practice’, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920), p. 95. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>85</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, ‘My Experiments with Truth’, *Pax International* (May 1926), p. 4; Mahatma Gandhi, *An Autobiography, Or, The Story of My Experiments with Truth* (Ahmedabad, India: Navajivan Trust, 1927).

<sup>86</sup> WILPF, ‘Pacifism in Practice’, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920), p. 92. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

In 1923, the principles of passive resistance were put to the test. France and Belgium invaded the Ruhr valley as Germany defaulted on its reparation payments. WILPF considered the occupation of the Ruhr valley to be a demonstration of French militarism and the association called on the French government to withdraw its forces from the area immediately. It also urged the League of Nations to act as an independent body to evaluate the system of reparations.<sup>87</sup> The Ruhr valley was home to a high concentration of German industry, particularly steel and coal production. Thus, the French and Belgian occupation of the area had a direct impact on a significant section of the German labour force. Labour groups – headed by the Joint Conference of the International Federation of Trade Unions and the Labour and Socialist International – condemned the occupation and its ‘disastrous consequences ... on an industrious and peaceful population’.<sup>88</sup> Marshall attended the International Federation of Trade Unions Conference held in Amsterdam and reported back to WILPF’s Congress in 1924. She explicitly linked the work of ‘the women who are waking up politically’ to the ‘the land workers who are also beginning to wake up politically’.<sup>89</sup> Both socialist and liberal internationalist groups hoped that the League of Nations could resolve the crisis.<sup>90</sup> The Ruhr became a test case for both the system of reparations enshrined in the Treaty of Versailles and the principles of peace through passive resistance as German workers peacefully refused to co-operate.<sup>91</sup>

Although workers in the Ruhr responded to French occupation forces with passive resistance, this form of non-violent action was not fully understood or supported by the German government, the press or German nationalists. Lida Gustava Heymann, a leading

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<sup>87</sup> WILPF, *Bulletin* (February 1923), p. 8.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>89</sup> Catherine Marshall, ‘League of Nations Work’, *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1924), p. 37. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1

<sup>90</sup> Daniel Laqua, ‘Democratic Politics and the League of Nations: The Labour and Socialist International as a Protagonist of Interwar Internationalism’, *Contemporary European History*, 24:2 (2015), p. 185.

<sup>91</sup> Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement*, p. 68.

German WILPF member, argued that government must respond with a will to negotiate. Heymann claimed that passive resistance in the Ruhr had failed due to a lack of support but she remained hopeful about the prospects of passive resistance as a tool for peaceful negotiation in the future.<sup>92</sup> At its fourth congress in 1924, WILPF's Commission on Passive Resistance reported on the 'far-reaching movements' in India and the Ruhr, which, they argued, demonstrated 'hope for the higher possibilities of the human race'.<sup>93</sup> WILPF organised its own 'peace mission' to the Ruhr to investigate the conditions in the area and it attempted to mediate with the occupation forces and the German government.<sup>94</sup> In Britain, WIL held a conference on the Ruhr situation on 23 February 1923. Representatives of seventeen different societies, including the Fabian Women's Group, Fellowship of Reconciliation, Independent Labour Party, League of Nations Union, Union of Democratic Control, and Women's Co-operative Guild were at the meetings. The conference condemned France's military occupation of the Ruhr and the British government's policy of 'benevolent neutrality' on the issue. WIL urged the British government to call an international conference with officials from France, Germany and Russia to discuss reparations, armies of occupation, security and universal disarmament.<sup>95</sup> WILPF's focus on the issue of German reparation payments declined after the peak of the Ruhr crisis in 1924, with the introduction of the Dawes plan. The US strategy facilitated the withdrawal of occupation forces in the Ruhr valley, set up a system of repayments and reorganised the Reichsbank – solving the international crisis in the short term. For WILPF, however, the crisis had confirmed the necessity of international co-operation for the pacific settlements

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<sup>92</sup> Lida Gustava Heymann, 'Passive Resistance', *Bulletin* (July–October 1923), p. 91.

<sup>93</sup> WILPF, 'Passive Resistance', *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1924), p. 24. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1

<sup>94</sup> WILPF, 'German Report', *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1924), p. 11. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1

<sup>95</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1923), p. 2.

of disputes and the vindictive nature of the Versailles Treaty, reflecting the victors' attitudes towards the defeated nations.

WILPF's hope for a reconciliation between the warring nations was somewhat achieved by Germany's entry to the League of Nations. In the regular column 'Glad Tidings for Pacifists' in its journal, *Pax International*, WILPF celebrated that on 10 September 1926 a German delegation was permitted entry to the Assembly of the League of Nations.<sup>96</sup> Similarly, WILPF welcomed the Locarno treaties between Germany, France, Belgium, Italy and Great Britain – ratified in 1926 – as a means of changing the old system of the balance of power. Zara Steiner describes the pact as a middle way between the 'alliances of the past and the collective security arrangements discussed at Geneva'.<sup>97</sup> Yet, the foreign secretaries of Britain, France and Germany – maintaining traditional diplomacy – negotiated the terms. Nevertheless, many peace activists hoped that the 'esprit de Locarno' would herald a new era of peaceful negotiation.<sup>98</sup>

### **The Peacemakers' Pilgrimage and the Women's Peace Crusade**

WIL was optimistic about the prospects for peace following the ratification of the Locarno Pact but believed permanent peace would only be secured through arbitration and disarmament, as such, it continued to lobby national governments to adopt such policies.<sup>99</sup> In 1926, the association initiated a nationwide campaign known as the Peacemakers' Pilgrimage, also labelled the 'women's campaign for law not war'.<sup>100</sup> Although WIL was part of the international WILPF, it was effective in organising its own campaigns on British soil that addressed its concerns for peace and international co-operation. members of WIL's national Executive Committee Executive – including Emmeline Pethick

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<sup>96</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (October 1926), p. 1.

<sup>97</sup> Steiner, *The Lights That Failed*, p. 408.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 408–409.

<sup>99</sup> 'Peace Pilgrimage: Reasons for the Women's Demonstration', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 April 1926, p. 14.

<sup>100</sup> Helen Ward, 'Peacemakers' Pilgrimage', *Monthly News Sheet* (February 1926), p. 1.

Lawrence and Maude Royden – led the Pilgrimage.<sup>101</sup> Led by former suffragists and suffragettes the campaign adopted the techniques of the great suffrage pilgrimage of 1913, which had been a symbolic demonstration of the regional suffrage campaigns. The peacemakers hoped to build on the success of the 1913 pilgrimage by mobilising women throughout the country. The principal aim of the Peacemakers' Pilgrimage was 'to arouse and educate British public opinion in favour of Arbitration'.<sup>102</sup>

Local committees were founded to co-ordinate the regional campaign, arrange the routes and organise publicity and hospitality for the pilgrims. WIL stressed the importance of a decentralised campaign to mobilise 'common people' across the country. Helen Ward claimed that 'these work-a-day ones the world depends for its salvation. If they want a thing, they can get it'.<sup>103</sup> WIL aimed to mobilise working people in its campaign for peace. Significantly, the Pilgrimage coincided with the 1926 General Strike, which took place between 4 and 13 May. Liddington argues that the momentum created by the General Strike contributed to the success of the Peacemakers' Pilgrimage.<sup>104</sup> Likewise, Bussey and Tims highlight that press reports on the pilgrimage were favourable, demonstrating an 'overwhelming sentiment for peace throughout Britain'.<sup>105</sup> The *Daily Mail* reported on the large crowds attracted to the meetings of the pilgrimage,<sup>106</sup> and the *Manchester Guardian* included details on the arrangements of the local routes and mass meetings.<sup>107</sup> The issues of peace and internationalism politicized swathes of women.<sup>108</sup> Nevertheless, not all were supportive of the women's pilgrimage – Karen Hunt and Matthew Worley note that the

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<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> WIL, Report of Delegate Conference on "An Arbitration and Disarmament Campaign in 1926" (proposed Pilgrimage), 19 January 1926, p. 1. WILPF, I:B, Reel 9.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>104</sup> Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common*, p. 145.

<sup>105</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 51.

<sup>106</sup> 'Women's Pilgrimage of Peace', *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition*, 20 June 1926, p. 5.

<sup>107</sup> 'Women's Pilgrimage of Peace: London Demonstration', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 June 1926, p. 12;

'Peace Pilgrimage: The Arrangements for Manchester', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 June 1926, p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> Gottlieb, *'Guilty Women'*, p. 38.

Communist Party of Great Britain were particularly critical of the ‘pious’ peace pilgrimage.<sup>109</sup> Yet, the campaign found support in industrial communities, who turned out to meet the pilgrims on their way to London. Eleanor Barton, of the Women’s Co-operative Guild, claimed that working women were ready to support arbitration and disarmament.<sup>110</sup> WIL described ‘the meetings in the Yorkshire mining villages, where the men are workless and families are enduring great hardship’ as ‘most wonderful’.<sup>111</sup>

Campaigners travelled to London along a number of different routes, using various forms of transport and, at times, travelling on foot. The route from Scotland started on 7 May and other routes commenced in the Midlands, Carlisle, South Wales, Ipswich, Sheringham, Brighton, Southampton and Land’s End – smaller tributaries also fed into the main routes to create a nationwide network.<sup>112</sup> Each route had its own colours – all incorporated blue as the colour of the Pilgrimage. Pilgrims also wore a blue tabard and an armlet with a badge, which included a design of a dove within a circle to symbolise peace and unity.<sup>113</sup> The *Observer* commented on the ‘brilliant national banners’ and the use of colour at the demonstration.<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the 1913 suffrage pilgrimage had adopted a uniform so that pilgrims could be identified, which had included the NUWSS’ colours of red, white and green.<sup>115</sup> The peace pilgrims converged in London for a mass meeting in Hyde Park on 19 June, which attracted large crowds. The *Daily Mail* reported that 7000

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<sup>109</sup> Karen Hunt and Matthew Worley, ‘Rethinking British Communist Party Women in the 1920s’, *Twentieth Century British History*, 15:1 (2004), p. 19.

<sup>110</sup> ‘Peace Pilgrims at Foreign Office: Interview with Sir A. Chamberlain’, *Manchester Guardian*, 7 July 1926, p. 12.

<sup>111</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (July 1926), p. 3.

<sup>112</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet*, (May 1926), p. 3.

<sup>113</sup> Peacemakers’ Pilgrimage Decorations Sub-Committee, Information and hints for Route committees and workers (1926). WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>114</sup> ‘Peace Pilgrims: The March to Hyde Park’, *The Observer*, 10 June 1926, p. 16.

<sup>115</sup> Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign, 1907–14* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1987), p. 141.

women had participated in the pilgrimage, including a woman aged 70 and two grandmothers.<sup>116</sup>

The energy displayed by the 1926 Peacemakers' Pilgrimage was reminiscent of the suffrage campaign and demonstrated the efficient organisation of the women's movement.<sup>117</sup> The pilgrimage mobilised a huge range of women, attracted passers-by and the campaign held numerous public meetings *en route* to London. Liddington claims that 'this was the women's peace movement at its imaginative best: unified, coherent and effective'.<sup>118</sup> The campaign was also supported by a range of other women's organisations, including the Women's Co-operative Guild, Women's Liberal Association, the Young Women's Christian Association, and mixed-sex organisations such as the League of Nations Union, and the Society of Friends.<sup>119</sup> In addition, leading figures from the suffrage movement were drawn into this mass movement for peace, most notably Millicent Garrett Fawcett.<sup>120</sup> Ethel Williams, Secretary of the Newcastle branch of WIL, described the three-hundred mile journey of the Northern route in WIL's *News Sheet*, commenting on the 'courage and enthusiasm, determination to work and real power of self-sacrifice' demonstrated by those on the campaign.<sup>121</sup>

The overall mood of the pilgrimage was one of optimism and 'hope which so often seems like a sigh of the heart will be turned into a song'.<sup>122</sup> The pilgrimage aimed to invoke positive public opinion about peace, arbitration and disarmament. The campaign confidently claimed that 'people who feel still rather hopeless about world-peace will see by the Pilgrimage that we who believe in Peace are not just idle visionaries, but we are

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<sup>116</sup> 'Women's Pilgrimage of Peace', *Daily Mail Atlantic Edition*, 20 June 1926, p. 5.

<sup>117</sup> Williams, 'Law, not War—Hedd Nid Cledd', p. 67.

<sup>118</sup> Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common*, p. 146.

<sup>119</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (April 1926), p. 1.

<sup>120</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1926), p. 3.

<sup>121</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (April 1926), p. 1.

<sup>122</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1926), p. 2.



willing to exert ourselves to the utmost in the cause of Peace'.<sup>123</sup> The news of the campaign spread to the USA, which WIL argued was 'proof that the international influence of our League is a reality'.<sup>124</sup> A deputation from the Pilgrimage secured a meeting with Austen Chamberlain, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, to demand that the government sign the optional clause of the Permanent Court of International Justice. The group also urged the government to make 'all-in' arbitration treaties rather than adhering to the traditional system that privileged national interests; and pressed the British government to take a lead in the proposed World Disarmament Conference.<sup>125</sup> Nevertheless, Chamberlain was reluctant to concede to the pilgrims' aims regarding arbitration and the 'optional clause'. He was hopeful that a disarmament conference would yield some success, but offered no real commitment about the British government's role at the proposed conference.<sup>126</sup> However, the campaign's real accomplishment was in demonstrating mass support for arbitration. WIL was hopeful that the power of public opinion could have a great effect on the government's foreign policy. Indeed, Williams believed that the Pilgrimage had 'taught us [is] that hearts and minds are ready for our message'.<sup>127</sup>

The Pilgrimage committee did not disband after June 1926, believing there was 'much zeal to carry on'. The committee joined forces with American women to create a British-American Women's Crusade. Although similar in name to the Women's Peace Crusade that WIL was part of during the Great War, it is not clear whether the committee chose this name to represent continuity in the women's peace movement. In 1928, the British Women's Peace Crusade (WPC) focused on the Kellogg-Briand Pact's 'outlawry of

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<sup>123</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1926), p. 1.

<sup>124</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (July 1926), p. 1.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid.

<sup>126</sup> 'Peace Pilgrims at Foreign Office: Interview with Sir A. Chamberlain', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 July 1926, p. 12.

<sup>127</sup> Ethel Williams, 'Impressions of a Northern Pilgrim', *Monthly News Sheet* (July 1926), p. 2.

war’ and campaigned for ‘the pacific settlement of all international disputes’.<sup>128</sup> 1928 was a significant year for the British women’s movement, as has been noted in Chapter Two. The Representation of the People (Equal Franchise) Act granted both women and men over the age of twenty-one the right to vote on equal terms. For WIL, 1928 was also noteworthy as the year that the British Government signed the Pact of Paris – also known as the Kellogg-Briand Pact. The Pact outlawed war as an instrument of national policy. The Women’s Peace Crusade described 1928 as ‘a great year for the women of this country’.<sup>129</sup> Similarly, Maude Royden wrote that

it is a great thing that women should no sooner have won their political freedom than they began to interest themselves in international peace; and that the Peace Crusade should belong to the same year as the extension of the franchise to all women on the same terms as men.<sup>130</sup>

The Crusade described the Kellogg-Briand Pact as ‘a new hope for the establishment of world peace’.<sup>131</sup> The peace movement used the Pact to reshape the debate, highlighting the connection between the aims of the agreement with disarmament and co-operation with the League of Nations.<sup>132</sup> Moreover, activists recognised that the agreement had no real provision to remove the causes of war, and was more of a pledge than a plan to prevent war.<sup>133</sup> The Pact has traditionally been described as a failure of political idealism or ‘a straw house in the path of the oncoming storm’, yet Daniel Gorman argues that the agreement marked a normative shift towards considering war illegitimate.<sup>134</sup> Moreover, Michael Pugh notes that scepticism about the provisions of the Pact gave way to

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<sup>128</sup> British-American Women’s Crusade, *America’s New Offer – A New Hope for the Establishment of a World Peace* (c.1928). SCPC, Women’s Peace Crusade, CDG-B Great Britain.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> A. Maude Royden in Women’s Peace Crusade, *Election Campaign for the return of a Parliament of Peacemakers* (1929). SCPC, WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

<sup>131</sup> Ibid.

<sup>132</sup> Michael Limberg, ‘In Relation to the Pact: Radical Pacifists and the Kellogg-Briand Pact, 1928–1939’, *Peace and Change*, 39:3 (2014), p. 396.

<sup>133</sup> Michael Pugh, *Liberal Internationalism: the Interwar Movement for Peace in Britain* (Basingtoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2000), p. 41.

<sup>134</sup> Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society in the 1920s*, pp. 259–60.

widespread public optimism.<sup>135</sup> WIL aimed to build on the success of the Pilgrimage, which had mobilised large numbers of women for the aims of peace, arbitration and disarmament. The association also hoped to build on the momentum of the campaign, expand its work and increase its membership.<sup>136</sup>

The British Crusade explicitly linked women's enfranchisement and the hope for peace, as it focused its energies on the 1929 General Election. Cecelia Lynch notes that 'women's groups immediately played up their newfound political power' after the passing of the Equal Franchise Act.<sup>137</sup> The 1929 election was nicknamed the 'women's election' or the 'flapper election' as young women were able to cast their votes for the first time. As a result, women outnumbered men at the ballot box by over a million, constituting 52.7% of the total electorate.<sup>138</sup> The Crusade encouraged women to use their newly-granted votes effectively in order to return a 'Parliament of Peacemakers', using pamphlets to educate new women voters about the election and the issues relating to war, peace and international relations. For example, a pamphlet produced by the Women's Peace Crusade posed the question: 'Women's Influence in Politics, Shall it be for Peace or War?'.<sup>139</sup> The campaign also emphasised the role that women would play in the transformation of politics to bring about international co-operation, 'to demonstrate that it is the task of the Motherhood of Woman to bring about the Brotherhood of Man'.<sup>140</sup> Using the rhetoric of service, citizenship and patriotism, the Crusade aimed to 'inspire ALL WOMEN to *mobilise* and

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<sup>135</sup> Pugh, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 42.

<sup>136</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (September 1926), p. 2.

<sup>137</sup> Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement*, p. 97.

<sup>138</sup> Pugh, *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain since 1914*, p. 123.

<sup>139</sup> Women's Peace Crusade, *Women's Influence in Politics, Shall it be for Peace or War?* (1929). SCPC, WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

<sup>140</sup> Women's Peace Crusade, *Application for Enrolment* (1928). SCPC, WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

fight as courageously and hopefully for PEACE AND SOCIAL WELFARE as men fought for victory in the Great War'.<sup>141</sup>

The Women's Peace Crusade operated across the country and represented two million women. Ninety-seven local committees held approximately 1,240 meetings during the election campaign. Like the Pilgrimage, the Crusade aimed to mobilise large numbers of women. A concerted effort was made to recruit young and working women, who had recently been enfranchised. The suffrage movement had struggled to recruit younger women to the cause after the war. Feminist novelist Winifred Holtby argued that most young women in the post-Great War era 'are not interested in ideas'.<sup>142</sup> The Crusade, however, managed to reach out to younger women through factory meetings and used Young Voters' Competitions to encourage women to join the Women's Peace Crusade. In Liverpool and Birmingham factory-meetings attracted working women and women speakers were overwhelmed by demands for meetings in Manchester.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, the campaign was particularly effective in North Wales, where WILPF's International Secretary, Emily Green Balch, addressed a large public meeting held in Bangor.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, WIL reported that 'the younger women (who) proved as responsive as their older sisters'.<sup>145</sup> The Crusade also employed techniques that had been popular in the suffrage campaign, such as deputations to MPs and the use of questionnaires to ascertain the views of candidates. The survey included questions on international relations, the Kellogg-Briand

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<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Winifred Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilisation* (London: John Lane, 1934), p. 115.

<sup>143</sup> Women's Peace Crusade, *Election Campaign for the return of a Parliament of Peacemakers* (1929), p. 11. SCPC, WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

<sup>144</sup> Williams, 'Law, not War – Hedd Nid Cledd', p. 76.

<sup>145</sup> Women's Peace Crusade, *Election Campaign for the return of a Parliament of Peacemakers* (1929), p. 10. SCPC, WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

Pact, the proposal for an international disarmament conference and immediate evacuation of the Rhineland.<sup>146</sup>

On 9 May 1929 – the eve of the dissolution of Parliament – the Crusade held an All-Party Peace Demonstration at Central Hall in Westminster calling for the election of a ‘Parliament of Peacemakers’ to make the renunciation of war a reality.<sup>147</sup> Like the earlier Pilgrimage, the Crusade was an alliance of women’s organisations. Twenty-nine societies were represented at the demonstration, including the Women’s Co-operative Guild, National Council of Women, British Commonwealth League, National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, as well as women in the Union of Democratic Control and League of Nations Union. Moreover, a number of women MPs supported the campaign, including Nancy Astor, Margaret Bondfield, Marion Phillips and Ellen Wilkinson. WIL played a leading role, as its aims for peace overlapped closely with the Crusade. WIL’s headquarters on Gower Street in London was as a base for the campaign and a number of WIL members took leading roles in the organisation of the Crusade, including Pethick Lawrence, Courtney, Swanwick and Manchester WIL member, Margaret Ashton.<sup>148</sup>

The Crusade represented hope and optimism within the women’s movement. Like WIL, the WPC was particularly concerned with public opinion, stating ‘we are encouraged to believe that there is a vast unregistered public opinion in favour of Peace if only we can organise it’.<sup>149</sup> The campaign demonstrates a concerted effort to encourage ‘active citizenship’ and confirms the presence of an engaged political culture in Britain between

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>148</sup> Women’s Peace Crusade, Programme of Work, January 1929. SCPC, WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

<sup>149</sup> Women’s Peace Crusade, *Election Campaign for the return of a Parliament of Peacemakers* (1929), p. 16. SCPC, WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

the wars.<sup>150</sup> In particular, the Crusade argued as enfranchised citizens, women could influence international relations. A cartoon used by the Crusade in its propaganda demonstrates this sentiment.

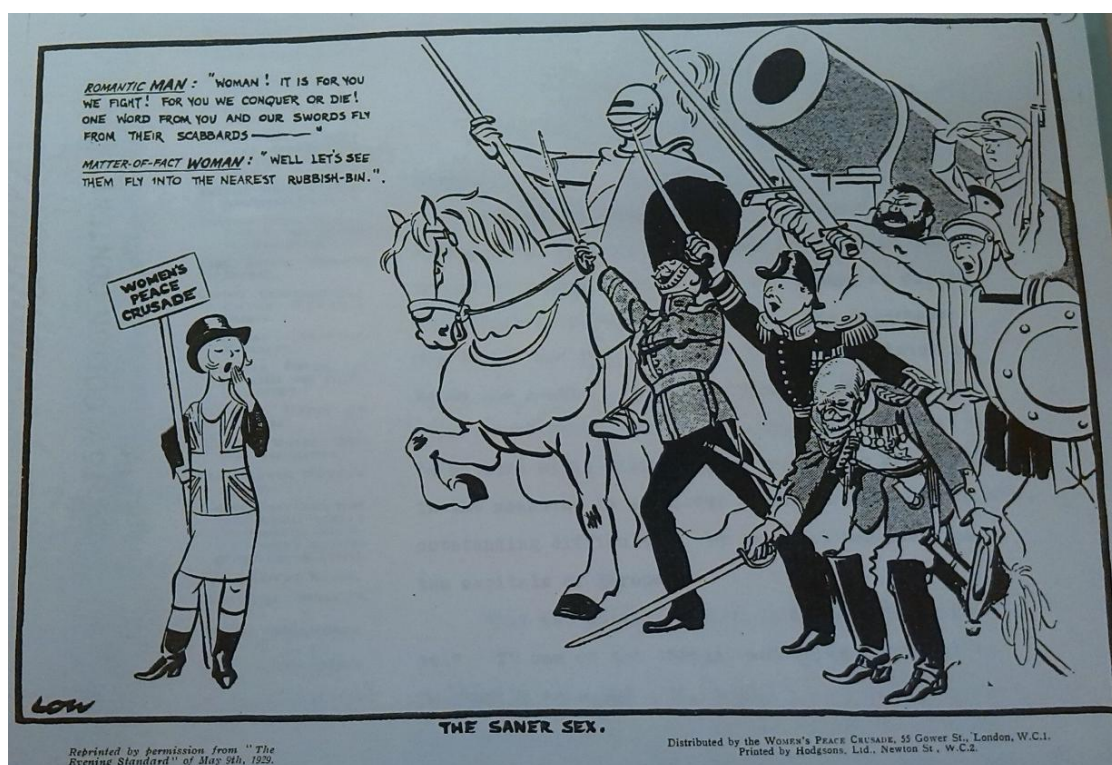


Figure 1: David Low, 'The Saner Sex', *Evening Standard* (9 May 1928), SCPC WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

The image was drawn by cartoonist, David Low and appeared in the *Evening Standard* on 9 May 1929 – the same day as the demonstration at Central Hall.<sup>151</sup> The image depicts Joan Bull campaigning for the Women's Peace Crusade. Joan Bull first appeared in one of Low's cartoons in January 1928 and featured in a number of his sketches relating to women's suffrage and equal franchise. Bull is a young woman with bobbed hair, wearing a loose dress with a short hemline of the iconic 1920s 'flapper' style. The character plays

<sup>150</sup> Helen McCarthy has shed light on the activity of voluntary associations in interwar Britain, which were integral to the political culture, McCarthy, 'Parties, Voluntary Associations, and democratic Politics'; Breitenbach and Wright, 'Women as Active Citizens', p. 404.

<sup>151</sup> David Low, 'The Saner Sex' (9 May 1928). First appeared in *The Evening Standard* and was reprinted by the Women's Peace Crusade in its publicity. This copy appeared in Women's Peace Crusade, *Election Campaign for the return of a Parliament of Peacemakers* (1929), p. 15. SCPC, WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

with the familiar imagery of the iconic John Bull, who came to epitomize ‘Britishness’ – both figures wear top hats and clothing emblazoned with the Union Jack. Unlike John Bull, Joan represents the changing British electorate, engaged political culture and modernity. As Adrian Bingham argues, press interest in the enfranchisement of women ‘contributed to a wider political effort to emphasise political citizenship’.<sup>152</sup> Despite the hostility from the conservative press, particularly the *Daily Mail*, towards young female voters, the popular press generally accepted and even promoted modernity, which is demonstrated in this cartoon.<sup>153</sup>

The image is titled ‘Saner Sex’ and pits Joan against a mob of war-hungry military men, including a Roman centurion, a knight on horseback and an elderly decorated war veteran. The ‘romantic men’ couch their militarism in the protection of women, declaring ‘Woman! It is for you we fight!’. However, Joan – labelled ‘matter-of-fact woman’ – appears nonplussed. The WPC used this image to highlight the contrast between militarism and peace, and emphasise the outdated notion of citizenship based on military service. The Crusade also stressed the power of the modern electorate, symbolised by a newly enfranchised ‘flapper’. Joan – as a ‘matter-of-fact woman’ – also challenges the idea that women were emotional and irrational, emphasising that the campaign for peace was rational and indeed, the ‘sane’ choice to make.

The Crusade continued to function throughout the 1930s, believing that its work during the election of 1929 was just the beginning and that ‘like all great movements its spirit is immortal. The enthusiasm it has inspired is no mere passing emotion; it has taken

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<sup>152</sup> Adrian Bingham, ‘Enfranchisement, Feminism and the Modern Woman: Debates in the British Popular Press, 1918–1939’, in Julie V. Gottlieb and Richard Toye eds., *The Aftermath of Suffrage: Women, Gender and Politics in Britain, 1918–1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 101.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid., p. 88; Adrian Bingham, “‘Stop the Flapper Vote Folly’: Lord Rothermere, the Daily Mail, and the Equalization of the Franchise 1927–28”, *Twentieth Century British History*, 13:1 (2002), pp. 17–37.

root' – although the mass campaign was never repeated.<sup>154</sup> The Crusade called on the Labour government elected in 1929 to recognise 'the clear mandate from the women as to what they want done in regard to Peace'.<sup>155</sup> WIL played a leading role in both the Peacemakers' Pilgrimage and the Women's Peace Crusade, which directly linked peace to women's enfranchisement and political status.

Vellacott argues that 1929–31 was a turning point in the history of WIL, claiming that as the international political, economic and social situation deteriorated in the 1930s, 'WILPF began to fail under the external pressures'.<sup>156</sup> However, Vellacott overlooks the continued confidence that universal disarmament could become a reality during the early 1930s. Disarmament became central to the wider peace movement in Britain as it aimed to strengthen collective security to prevent war.<sup>157</sup> The report of WILPF's 1929 international congress conveys a sense of optimism, even if it is somewhat dimmed. WILPF members were hopeful that the Kellogg-Briand Pact would make war obsolete and noted that a number of 'peace-loving men' held governmental office in Czecho-Slovakia, France, Germany, Denmark, Britain and the USA.<sup>158</sup> WILPF acknowledged that Europe was facing an uncertain period as 'it may fall into Fascism, reaction and obscurantism' but urged the women to 'watch and work'.<sup>159</sup> WIL's next major campaign was the drive for disarmament.

### **The disarmament campaign**

At WILPF's seventh international congress, held in Grenoble in May 1932, the organisation noted that 'the greater part of resources and energy was employed during

<sup>154</sup> Women's Peace Crusade, *Election Campaign for the return of a Parliament of Peacemakers* (1929), p. 15. SCPC, WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>156</sup> Vellacott, 'Feminism as if All People Mattered', p. 392.

<sup>157</sup> Pugh, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 48.

<sup>158</sup> Jane Addams, 'President's Address', *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Prague, August 24 to 28, 1929* (Geneva: WILPF, 1929), p. 13. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>159</sup> Camille Drevet, 'Report on the Mission to Eastern Europe and to the Balkans', *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Prague, August 24 to 28, 1929* (Geneva: WILPF, 1929), p. 22. SCPC, WILPF Collection (DG043), Part II, Reel 141.2.



1929, 1930 and 1931 in the *work of total and universal disarmament*'.<sup>160</sup> The women's campaign for disarmament was a collaborative effort between national sections, and included co-operation with other women's organisations and the League of Nations. The Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations presented six million signatures to the World Disarmament Conference in February 1932.

The Treaty of Versailles strictly limited German armaments but not the armaments of the victorious nations. A loose commitment was made for the initiation of the general limitation of arms in all nations and Article 8 of the Covenant of the League of Nations left plans for a reduction of armaments to the League Council.<sup>161</sup> This lip service to the reduction of armaments stimulated the interwar peace movement to pursue general disarmament. WILPF had been committed to disarmament since its 1919 congress.<sup>162</sup> In 1921, the organisation held a special session on disarmament at its Vienna congress and by 1926 most WILPF national sections were working in their own countries for disarmament 'as the only logical method to combat danger'.<sup>163</sup> The German WILPF section saw the campaign for complete disarmament as Germany's chance to prevent future war and it worked to 'help remove everything that still prevents such an ideal being realised'.<sup>164</sup>

In 1926, the League of Nations created a Preparatory Commission for a World Disarmament Conference, which gave transnational activists a focus for their disarmament

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<sup>160</sup> WILPF, 'Report on Activities', *Report of the Seventh Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Grenoble, May 15 to 19, 1932* (Geneva: WILPF, 1932), p. 19. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>161</sup> Davies, *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism*, p. 57.

<sup>162</sup> WILPF, 'Resolution on the League of Nations', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>163</sup> WILPF, 'Special Session on Disarmament', *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10 to 17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 118. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1; WILPF, 'Swiss National Section Report', *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 54. WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>164</sup> WILPF, 'German National Section Report', *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 32. WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

campaigns. In Britain, the LNU launched its own disarmament campaign and the WPC also urged for disarmament.<sup>165</sup> In October 1928, the President of the Ninth Assembly of the League of Nations, Henry Zahle of Denmark received a WILPF deputation. WILPF's memorial stated that 'unless immediate steps are taken to accomplish general disarmament, fresh wars are bound to ensue'.<sup>166</sup> WILPF pointed to the signing of the Kellogg-Briand Pact by fifteen nations as an opening for disarmament discussions and urged the League to call a world conference on disarmament immediately.<sup>167</sup> Notably, WILPF asserted the right of women to speak on the international stage about disarmament and international relations.<sup>168</sup>

The 1930 Naval Conference, held in London, also contributed to the momentum surrounding disarmament. The WPC organised a women's deputation to the Conference to present a memorial to the delegates. There were British, Japanese, American and French women on the delegation.<sup>169</sup> *Pax Internationala* reported that the group 'represented the largest number of women that ever united in a deputation'.<sup>170</sup> Similarly, British Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald described the group as 'pioneers in the peace movement'.<sup>171</sup> Margery Corbett Ashby, President of the IAWSEC, argued that the 'deputation is memorable because it is introducing women as a new factor in international politics'.<sup>172</sup> The representatives presented petitions to the Naval Conference, urging governments to 'do all in their power to give effect to the widespread and considered demand of women from all parts of the country that a large decrease be now secured by international

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<sup>165</sup> Davies, *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism*, p. 76.

<sup>166</sup> WILPF, *Pax Internationala* (October 1928), p. 4.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 360.

<sup>169</sup> Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement*, p. 97.

<sup>170</sup> WILPF, *Pax Internationala* (March 1930), p. 3.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid.

<sup>172</sup> Women's Peace Crusade, Women and Disarmament: the deputation of American, British, French and Japanese Women received by the Chair of the London Naval Conference at St. James' Palace, 6 February 1930, p. 7. WILPF, III, Reel 69.

agreement in the naval armaments of the world'.<sup>173</sup> The campaign stressed women's roles in international affairs. WIL 'bombed the Prime Minister with petitions' from the opening of the Naval Conference in January 1930 – a technique that inspired one of WILPF's most iconic campaigns in the interwar period: the disarmament petition.<sup>174</sup>

The League Preparatory Commission produced a draft Disarmament Convention on 9 December 1930 and set the opening date for the Conference for the Reduction and Limitation of Armaments – more commonly known as the World Disarmament Conference – for 2 February 1932.<sup>175</sup> A number of groups campaigning for peace and disarmament coalesced to co-ordinate their combined efforts, including a Disarmament Committee of Christian International Organisations, Disarmament Committee of Students' International Organisations, and a Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organisations (DCWIO). The International Federation of League of Nations Societies (IFLNS) also formed a disarmament committee and the Labour and Socialist International united with the International Federation of Trade Unions to create a disarmament commission to represent the labour movement.<sup>176</sup> The Women's Disarmament Committee first met in June 1931 and had roots in the Liaison Committee of International Women's Organisations, which WILPF was already part of.<sup>177</sup>

On the suggestion of German WILPF member, Frida Perlen, WILPF adopted a disarmament declaration, which stated 'the undersigned men and women, irrespective of party, STAND FOR WORLD DISARMAMENT'.<sup>178</sup> WIL's disarmament committee mobilised from September 1930 to collect signatures in support of the declaration. The

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<sup>173</sup> Ibid., p. 11

<sup>174</sup> WILPF, *Pax Internationala* (April 1930), p. 6.

<sup>175</sup> Davies, *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism*, p. 82.

<sup>176</sup> Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>177</sup> Supra-national women's organisations, including the Liaison Committee are explored further in Chapter Four; Lynch, *Beyond Appeasement*, p. 99.

<sup>178</sup> WIL, *The Story of the Disarmament Declaration* (Essex: The Talbot Press, c.1932), p. 2. WILPF, III, Reel 70.

British women's campaign increased in momentum following a public meeting organised by WIL at Queen's Hall, 9 February 1931. British Foreign Secretary and President of the upcoming World Disarmament Conference, Arthur Henderson addressed the gathering, which attracted wide-ranging support. Following the meeting, the committee collected a quarter of a million signatures in one night alone.<sup>179</sup> WIL also attracted the support of religious groups to the campaign – including nonconformists, the established church, Roman Catholic and Jewish leaders. Both the Labour and Liberal parties also supported the women's campaign. Moreover, significant individuals signed the petition including H.G. Wells, Bertrand Russell, Albert Einstein and Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>180</sup>

Significant co-operation between women's organisations at both the national and international level aided the international women's disarmament campaign. By January 1931, forty-five British organisations had adopted the declaration.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless, there were divides within the campaign and four different versions of the declaration were used. WIL's declaration differed to the text used by French and German branches of WILPF. In addition, both the IAWSEC and the US Committee of the Cause and Cure of War produced their own versions of the text. The British declaration urged for 'world disarmament', whereas continental branches of WILPF argued for 'total and universal disarmament'.<sup>182</sup> The different language used in the declaration represents the deepening divisions within WILPF along an Anglo-American/Franco-German rift. The continental branches of WILPF tended to be more radical, influenced by their co-operation with communist-front ventures, such as the Women's World Committee Against War and

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<sup>179</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>180</sup> WIL, International Declaration on World Disarmament (1932). WILPF, III, Reel 77.

<sup>181</sup> By 1932, sixty five British organisations had signed the declaration. WIL, *The Story of the Disarmament Declaration* (c.1932), p. 4. WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>182</sup> Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations, *Official Record of the Declarations and Petitions* (Geneva, 1932), p. 11. SCPC, PDCWIO, CDG-B Switzerland.

Fascism.<sup>183</sup> Whereas, the British branch tended to be more gradualist in its methods and approach.<sup>184</sup> Although a number of WIL members had links to socialism and communism, the association's approach had much more in common with the political centrism of the League of Nations Union.<sup>185</sup> For instance, in April 1929 divergences emerged between British and German members of the International Executive Committee during discussions about an invitation from the League Against Imperialism to send a delegation to its congress. Lida Gustave Heymann, a German member, thought that WILPF should send representatives to the meetings. Yet, the British section 'felt it unwise to be officially represented at a meeting of an organisation which is frankly non-pacificistic'.<sup>186</sup> Although WIL was a critic of imperialism, which had been the focus of its 1926 International Congress, the League Against Imperialism was established in 1927 as a Communist initiative.<sup>187</sup> A number of WIL members were therefore reticent about involvement with the League Against Imperialism. National priorities, therefore, infiltrated WILPF's decision-making process.

The inconsistency within the women's campaign, demonstrated by the alternative wording of the petition, may have limited its impact on the Disarmament Conference. Thomas Davies' suggests that the transnational activism of the interwar disarmament campaign asserts that the influence and power of national priorities limited the co-operation and efficacy of the transnational movement for disarmament.<sup>188</sup> Indeed, he notes that existing literature on transnational campaigns has tended to focus on those, which

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<sup>183</sup> Emmanuelle Carle, 'Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace in Interwar France: Gabrielle Duchêne's Itinerary', *French History*, 18:3 (2004), pp. 300–6.

<sup>184</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 120.

<sup>185</sup> For instance, Helen Crawford and Ellen Wilkinson were members of WIL and formative members of the British Communist Party. Links between WIL and socialism are explored in Chapter Five. Yet, WIL adopted a non-partisan approach, like the LNU. See McCarthy, *British People and the League of Nations*, p. 184.

<sup>186</sup> WILPF, International Executive Committee Meeting, 18 April 1929, p. 19. WILPF MF, I:B, Reel 10.

<sup>187</sup> Stephen Howe, *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire, 1918–1964* (Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1993), p. 72.

<sup>188</sup> Davies, *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism*, p. 9.

resulted in success, rather than failure, and has thus neglected the campaign for disarmament during the early 1930s.<sup>189</sup> Nevertheless, the women's movement collected over six million signatures by the opening of the Disarmament Conference in February 1932 – including 2,146,775 British signatures. Approximately ten percent of the total Welsh population boosted the total number of British signatures, which constituted the largest national contribution.<sup>190</sup>

In Britain, women campaigned outside cinemas before and after war films, set up stalls in market places, rented empty shops for the campaign and canvassed door-to-door.<sup>191</sup> The *News Chronicle* published the declaration regularly, which brought in an extra 500,000 names. The LNU circulated WIL's declaration at a meeting held on 11 July 1931, which coincided with WIL's procession from Embankment to the Albert Hall. The Union also published the declaration in its own journal and pamphlets, which increased the total number of signatures significantly.<sup>192</sup> At its peak in 1931, LNU boasted 400,000 members in over three thousand branches, which allowed WIL to reach a wide cross-section of the British public.<sup>193</sup>

WIL argued that its campaign had changed public opinion on disarmament, stating that in September 1930 'the average conservative-minded middle-class person was unwilling to sign' but by January 1932, they were 'anxious to sign'.<sup>194</sup> WIL recognised that perhaps the 'chief value of the declaration' was that it allowed supporters to feel actively involved, eschewing the passivity associated with the peace movement: 'it served

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<sup>189</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>190</sup> Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations, *Official Record of the Declarations and Petitions* (Geneva, 1932), pp. 15–16. SCPC, PDCWIO, CDG-B Switzerland.

<sup>191</sup> WIL, *The Story of the Disarmament Declaration* (Essex: The Talbot Press, c.1932), p. 4. WILPF, III: British Section, Reel 70.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>193</sup> McCarthy, 'Leading from the Centre', p. 529.

<sup>194</sup> WIL, *The Story of the Disarmament Declaration* (Essex: The Talbot Press, c.1932), p. 6. WILPF, III, Reel 70.

to waken the interest of our countrymen, to quicken their imagination'.<sup>195</sup> In addition, WIL made a special effort to encourage young people to join the campaign for disarmament, holding a 'post-war generation' meeting on the eve of the opening of the World Disarmament Conference.<sup>196</sup> Young politicians from the three main parties – Thelma Cazalet (Conservative), Ishbel MacDonald (Labour) and Megan Lloyd George (Liberal) addressed the meeting at University College.<sup>197</sup> WIL were hopeful that this demonstration by the under thirties would 'bear much fruit' for the disarmament cause.<sup>198</sup>

The campaign culminated in a symbolic valediction of the petitions as WIL sent the declarations to Geneva. LNU's Robert Cecil and WIL members Ethel Snowden, Kathleen Courtney and Margaret Bondfield made speeches at WIL headquarters in London. Philip Noel Baker made an address on behalf of Arthur Henderson as the petitions boarded the train at Victoria Station.<sup>199</sup> At Geneva train station, delegates added the British declarations to those from other countries at a reception ceremony. WILPF had worked in forty-five countries and as a member of the DCIWO had contributed to the collection of six million signatures for the disarmament declaration.<sup>200</sup> WILPF celebrated the declaration as the 'outward symbol of that inward world unity'.<sup>201</sup> In the US, WILPF had organised a 'peace caravan', which took the campaign from Los Angeles in June 1931 to the White House in October 1931. Campaigns in Australia, Canada, Bulgaria, China, France and German were

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<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1931), p. 1.

<sup>197</sup> Thelma Cazalet was elected in a 1931 by-election for East Islington; Ishbel Macdonald, daughter of Ramsay Macdonald, served on the London County Council from 1928 for Poplar and then Bow and Bromley; Megan Lloyd George, David Lloyd George's daughter, was elected to Parliament in 1929 for Anglesey as the first woman to be elected in a Welsh constituency. See, 'Keir, Thelma Cazalet- (1899–1989)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2007); 'MacDonald, Ishbel Allan (1903–1982)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2015); 'George, Lady Megan Arfon Lloyd (1902–1966)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford University Press, 2014). <http://www.oxforddnb.com>, accessed 19 Oct 2016.

<sup>198</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1932), p. 1.

<sup>199</sup> WIL, *The Story of the Disarmament Declaration* (Essex: The Talbot Press, c.1932), p. 9. WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>200</sup> Ibid.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid., p. 10

also successful, but the Swiss campaign was ‘the most wonderful of all’. Eight percent of the Swiss population signed the declaration, the largest proportion of the population of all the countries that participated.<sup>202</sup> Indeed, Davies claims that the women’s disarmament petition was the ‘world’s largest petition to date’ in relation to the world’s population.<sup>203</sup> Delegates presented the petitions at an Extraordinary Plenary Session of the Conference, 6 February 1932. Although the declarations were grouped by country, the women rejected any sense of national pride claiming that ‘we were conscious of standing there, not as English women, or German women, or American women, or Swiss women, but simply as women – women who had one desire, the furthering of peace’.<sup>204</sup> The presentation of the petitions was a symbolic moment of unity between women of different nations for the cause of peace. With the power of public opinion behind them, WILPF were hopeful for the prospect of world disarmament.<sup>205</sup>

However, just eight months later, Kathleen Courtney – WIL President and DCWIO Vice President – reported that ‘the Disarmament Conference is in danger’.<sup>206</sup> Difficulties had arisen over the issues of equality and security; Germany protested against its unequal status and withdrew from the Conference. In addition, Courtney lamented that ‘people’s minds are hardening, there is a recrudescence of nationalist and chauvinist spirit in various countries’.<sup>207</sup> The major powers were reluctant to reduce their military capabilities. The British government claimed that its imperial responsibilities justified its level of

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<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Davies, *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism*, p. 10.

<sup>204</sup> WIL, *The Story of the Disarmament Declaration* (Essex: The Talbot Press, c.1932), p. 11. WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>205</sup> The transnational attempts to unite women through the Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women’s International Organisations are also discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>206</sup> K.D. Courtney, Letter to the members of the Disarmament Committee of Women’s International Organisations, October 1932. SCPC, PDCWIO, CDG-B Switzerland.

<sup>207</sup> Ibid.



armaments and argued against total disarmament.<sup>208</sup> The Disarmament Conference eventually collapsed in 1934.

Notwithstanding these disappointments, the remarkable efforts of the women's campaign were recognised in 1934 when Lord Robert Cecil nominated the DCWIO – which WILPF was a member of – for the Nobel Peace Prize.<sup>209</sup> He argued that the women's committee was

unusually representative in character ... and has successfully endeavoured on the one hand to express at Geneva the desire of the women for peace and disarmament, and on the other to lead and inform public opinion all over the world on the issues before the Disarmament Conference.<sup>210</sup>

The nomination demonstrates international recognition of the important contribution made by the women's committee to the campaign for disarmament. Davies remarks that one of the most visible results of the disarmament campaign was the appointment of activists as national delegates to the conference. The British government selected IAWSEC President Margery Corbett Ashby, while Mary Woolley, President of the American Association of University Women, was chosen by the US government as members of their respective delegations, under pressure from the Liaison Committee of Women's International Organisations to choose a female representative.<sup>211</sup> The Nobel Committee granted the 1934 prize to Arthur Henderson for his work, as President of the World Disarmament Conference, rather than the DCWIO. Nonetheless, the following year Jane Addams received the Nobel Peace Prize. The recognition of Addams' work as a peace worker inspired WILPF to continue its work for peace and disarmament. WILPF's co-chair,

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<sup>208</sup> Cortright, *Peace*, p. 105; Pugh, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 67.

<sup>209</sup> Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations, Circular Letter, 12 January 1934. SCPC, PDCWIO, CDG-B Switzerland.

<sup>210</sup> Viscount Cecil, Draft of Letter to the Nobel Committee, 1934. SCPC, PDCWIO, CDG-B Switzerland.

<sup>211</sup> Davies, *The Possibilities of Transnational Activism*, p. 152; Melissa Anne Hensley, 'Feminine Virtue and Feminist Fervor: The Impact of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom in the 1930s', *Affilia*, 21:2 (2006), p. 149.

Gertrude Baer urged the organisation to ‘draw the peace phalanx closer together; hammer into the hearts and heads of your statesmen Jane Addams’ demand for general, total world disarmament’.<sup>212</sup>

### **Peace and/or freedom?**

In the 1930s, the international political and economic situation deteriorated and hopes for the World Disarmament Conference faded. Moreover, 1928–1933 saw a revival in Great War recollections through novels, poetry and film, such as Erich Maria Remarque’s novel *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1929) and its subsequent film adaptation, as well as Vera Brittain’s *Testament of Youth* (1933), which highlighted the waste of war.<sup>213</sup> Steiner connects the ‘war boom’ in popular culture to the appearance of a new type of pacifism. Although peace organisations were marginal, she demonstrates that they reached a wider audience in the 1930s, through campaigns such as the disarmament petition and the LNU’s Peace Ballot, 1934–5.<sup>214</sup> At the same time, a ‘never again’ attitude towards war led to an isolationist response embodied by the British Peace Pledge Union, which was established in 1936. In contrast, a number of liberal internationalists were drawn to the campaign for an international police force to establish collective security.<sup>215</sup> Swanwick criticised proposals for an international air force in her work, arguing that ‘not by mechanical means will domination and brutality be converted to constructive effort; but by welding so strong

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<sup>212</sup> Gertrude Baer, ‘Homage to Jane Addams’, *Pax International* (January 1932), p. 2.

<sup>213</sup> Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Berlin: Propyläen Verlag, 1929); Vera Brittain, *Testament of Youth* (London: Victor Gollancz, 1933); Claire M. Tylee, *The Great War and Women’s Consciousness, Images of Militarism and Womanhood, 1914–1964* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1990), p. 209.

<sup>214</sup> Steiner, *The Lights That Failed*, p. 758.

<sup>215</sup> Pugh, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 69

a spirit of gallant comradeship that it will use all mechanical means for the one great purpose only; whose service is perfect freedom'.<sup>216</sup>

Yet, WILPF was torn between its two central concerns: peace and freedom. The association met in Zurich in 1934, where parallels were drawn with the association's previous meetings held in the city after the Great War. WILPF was disheartened by the developments in Europe, the rising nationalism and the increased threat of war. Clara Ragaz, a Swiss WILPF member, remarked 'we must surely admit that the fundamental principles which had brought us together to our common work never stood so low as they do to-day and that the catastrophic course of events, as they have developed since 1919, did not follow the line that we foresaw'.<sup>217</sup> WILPF had drawn together activists from a range of backgrounds for the combined aims of peace and equality, yet Ragaz noted that the 'differences in our political outlook have become accentuated'.<sup>218</sup> Some members of the organisation continued to support peace, whereas others saw fascism as the most pertinent threat to permanent peace. Ragaz went on to state that

clearly the struggle to maintain democratic institutions and rights is very closely bound up in our whole struggle for peace and freedom. This has led many of us to put the struggle against fascism so much in the foreground that the struggle against militarism seems with many to be almost relegated to the second place – although as a matter of fact both are so closely bound together that a campaign against one is equivalent to a fight against the other.<sup>219</sup>

WIL's chair, Kathleen Innes argued that the association must continue to 'stand for peace without violence'. Innes objected to co-operation with anyone who believed violence could be justified, 'not even when it aims at the overthrow of violence', maintaining that

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<sup>216</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, *Frankenstein and his Monster* (London: WIL, 1934), p. 22; Helena M. Swanwick, *New Wars for Old (A reply to the Rt. Hon. Lord Davies and others)* (London: WIL, 1934). SCPC, Helena Swanwick, CDG-B Great Britain, Box 2.

<sup>217</sup> Clara Ragaz, 'Problems resulting for the work and methods of W.I.L.P.F.', *Eighth International Congress: Minutes of Proceedings, Zurich, September 3 to 8, 1934*, p. 2. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*

‘peace is a method and not a state’.<sup>220</sup> WILPF had debated the use of violence in revolutionary movements since its international congress in 1919, expressing sympathy ‘with the purpose of the workers’ but continued to advocate non-violence in all circumstances.<sup>221</sup> Nonetheless, as has been noted, WIL had many links and shared interests with socialist organisations; a number of its members were also active in labour and socialist circles, including Ellen Wilkinson, Margaret Bondfield and Helen Crawfurd. The differences between liberal and socialist women were mostly subsumed by their shared interests in peace, social justice and women’s rights during the 1920s,<sup>222</sup> yet the increased threat from fascism sharpened the divides in the early 1930s, as some members leaned towards advocating military action to protect freedom and justice.<sup>223</sup>

Alternatively, Gertrude Baer, the German international co-Chair of WILPF, declared ‘State-Fascism is our worse enemy and we cannot possibly stand for a programme which claims justice if we do not take a clear position on this question and declare ourselves to be with those who are exploited, oppressed and murdered by fascism’.<sup>224</sup> The activity of the German women’s movement was restricted under the Nazi regime and German WILPF members, Anita Augspurg and Lida Gustava Heymann escaped to Switzerland in 1933. Nonetheless, both Innes and Baer agreed that there was a crisis in WILPF and that ‘the present depressed and gloomy time makes it more important than ever that we remain united and stand for these principles. United we have still the greatest of

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<sup>220</sup> K. A. Innes, ‘Discussion’, *Eighth International Congress: Minutes of Proceedings, Zurich, September 3 to 8, 1934*, p.1. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>221</sup> WILPF, ‘Resolution A VIII – Relation of Pacifists to Revolutionary Movements’, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920), p. 21. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>222</sup> Beers, ‘Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism’, p. 214; Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women*, p. 180.

<sup>223</sup> Gottlieb, ‘The Women’s Movement Took a Wrong Turning’, p. 446.

<sup>224</sup> Gertrude Baer, ‘Discussion’, *Eighth International Congress: Minutes of Proceedings, Zurich, September 3 to 8, 1934*, p. 3. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

tasks before us'.<sup>225</sup> WILPF's Honorary President, Emily Greene Balch argued that the association 'must not be too pessimistic about the present situation though doubtless it is a difficult one'. Balch continued to advocate non-violence but stated 'we must avoid committing ourselves to too definite program because this would mean that we could not unite our membership'.<sup>226</sup>

Nevertheless, a number of WILPF members believed that fascism was the ultimate manifestation of militarism. Gabrielle Duchêne, leader of the French WILPF section, argued that 'our actions must not be based on orthodox pacifist ideology, but on practical endeavours against fascism and war'.<sup>227</sup> In March 1934, Duchêne presented a statement to the WILPF Executive Committee arguing that capitalism was not compatible with permanent peace and 'that fascism is simply one manifestation of the self-defense of capitalism'.<sup>228</sup> Duchêne argued that WILPF should take an active role in the social transformation of society from a capitalist system 'to obtain the permanent peace for the sake of which our League was formed'.<sup>229</sup> Duchêne was a fellow traveller of the French Communist Party and played an important role in the organisation of the Women of the World Against War and Fascism Congress, which was held in Paris in August 1934.<sup>230</sup> The Paris Congress led to the formation of – Communist-front venture – the Women's World Committee Against War and Fascism, which was linked to the communist Amsterdam-Pleyel movement and the anti-fascist Popular Front.<sup>231</sup> The French Section of WILPF – La

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<sup>225</sup> K.A. Innes, 'Discussion', *Eighth International Congress: Minutes of Proceedings, Zurich, September 3 to 8, 1934*, p. 1. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>226</sup> Emily Greene Balch, 'Discussion', *Eighth International Congress: Minutes of Proceedings, Zurich, September 3 to 8, 1934*, p. 12. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>227</sup> Gabrielle Duchêne, 'Discussion', *Eighth International Congress: Minutes of Proceedings, Zurich, September 3 to 8, 1934*, p. 6. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>228</sup> Gabrielle Duchêne, 'Is Capitalism compatible with lasting Peace?', *Pax International* (July–August 1934), p. 2.

<sup>229</sup> Ibid.

<sup>230</sup> Carle, 'Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace', pp. 291–31; Lorraine Coons, 'Gabrielle Duchêne: Feminist, Pacifist, Reluctant Bourgeoise', *Peace and Change*, 24:2 (1999), pp. 121–47.

<sup>231</sup> Gabrielle Duchêne, 'Women Against War and Fascism', *Pax International* (March–April 1935), p. 3.

Ligue Internationale des Femmes pour la Paix et la Liberté (LIFPL) – was a key player in the French Committee of Women Against War and Fascism.<sup>232</sup>

LIFPL's proximity to fascism and communism influenced its shift from pacifism to anti-fascism and contributed to its engagement with communist internationalism.<sup>233</sup> In comparison, in response to German fascism, the Comintern was increasingly willing to co-operate with other political groups.<sup>234</sup> However, within WILPF, a divide opened up between the Anglo-American-Scandinavian and the Franco-German sections, broadly speaking. Yet, Siân Reynolds notes that the LIFPL was internally divided over its support for the Soviet Union, which led to the expulsion of leaders of the Lyon branch – who challenged Duchêne's pro-Soviet agenda – in 1936.<sup>235</sup> Anita Gelblum identifies the socialist influences on German WILPF members Augpurg and Heymann.<sup>236</sup> Mary Sheepshanks noted that the 'French and German members found themselves in agreement with each other, but not with the British'. She described her continental colleagues as 'extremists, even fanatics, and looked with suspicion and aversion on the British tendency to find half a loaf better than none'.<sup>237</sup> On the continent, the fascist threat was very real. Women's political organisations were restricted in Germany and a number of leading German WILPF members went into exile.<sup>238</sup> In June 1933, Edith Pye, the British international co-Chair of WILPF, wrote to Hitler to appeal for the release of Munich WILPF Secretary, Emma Machenhauer, from prison.<sup>239</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> Siân Reynolds, *France between the Wars* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 197; Gabrielle Duchêne, 'The Political Crisis and the Progress of United Action in France', *Pax International* (January–February 1936), pp. 1–2.

<sup>233</sup> Carle, 'Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace', p. 292.

<sup>234</sup> Laqua, 'Democratic Politics and the League of Nations', p. 191.

<sup>235</sup> Reynolds, *France Between the Wars*, p. 198.

<sup>236</sup> Gelblum, 'Ideological Crossroads', pp. 316–8.

<sup>237</sup> Mary Sheepshanks, *The Long Day Ended* (typescript, c.1952), p. 156. TWL@LSE, 7MSH, FL642.

<sup>238</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 33.

<sup>239</sup> E. M. Pye to Adolf Hitler, 6 June 1933. WILPF, I:A, Reel 2.

In contrast, Balch's statement to the 1934 Congress suggests that she felt removed from the immediate threat of war and fascism. In Britain, the anti-fascist response was incoherent and WIL was ambivalent towards the Women's World Committee Against War and Fascism. Yet, Ellen Wilkinson who had been involved with WIL was active in the Committee.<sup>240</sup> Wilkinson remained a staunch critic of Chamberlain's appeasement policy and supported Stafford Cripps' Popular Front campaign.<sup>241</sup> Moreover, alongside Wilkinson, a number of WIL supporters were connected to the Communist Party of Great Britain, including the co-ordinator of the 1916–7 Women's Peace Crusade, Helen Crawford.<sup>242</sup> WIL distanced itself from communism and Comintern ventures – it remained committed to disarmament as its primary aim and 'could not see eye to eye with those who considered that war was inevitable as long as tyrannical forms of government, such as those of Germany and Italy, existed'.<sup>243</sup> WIL proposed only working with such groups 'when they can do so "without abandoning in any way our principles and our convictions"'.<sup>244</sup>

Individual members of WIL took very different approaches to the rising threat of fascism and war. Sheepshanks resigned as WILPF's International Secretary in 1929. She 'felt unable to continue any longer' due to tensions within the international executive – she found it increasingly difficult to work with German and French members, Lida Gustava Heymann, Gertrude Baer, Gabrielle Duchêne and Camille Drevet.<sup>245</sup> She continued to serve on WIL's executive as Honorary National Secretary. Similarly, Courtney – who had

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<sup>240</sup> Matt Perry, *'Red Ellen Wilkinson' Her Ideas, Movements and World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 280; Martin Ceadel, 'The First Communist "Peace Society": The British Anti-War Movement, 1932–1935', *Twentieth Century British History*, 1:1 (1990), p. 74.

<sup>241</sup> Gottlieb, *'Guilty Women'*, p. 236. It is also interesting to note that Stafford Cripp's stepmother, Lady Parmoor, was a member of WIL's Executive Committee. His aunt, Lady Courtney of Penwith was also active on WIL's Executive Committee: Oldfield, *Women Humanitarians*, pp. 66–7.

<sup>242</sup> Hunt and Worley, 'Rethinking British Communist Party Women', p. 6.

<sup>243</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1934), p. 3; see also Hunt and Worley, 'Rethinking British Communist Party Women', p. 19.

<sup>244</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1933), p. 4.

<sup>245</sup> Mary Sheepshanks, *The Long Day Ended* (typescript, c.1952), p. 160. TWL@LSE, 7MSH, FL642; Sybil Oldfield, *Spinners of This Parish, The Life and Times of F.M. Mayor and Mary Sheepshanks* (London: Virago, 1984), p. 261.

served on WIL's Executive Committee from 1915, becoming Chair in 1923 and President in 1932 – resigned as the branch's President in 1933. Nonetheless, she remained on WIL's committee until 1935 and continued to report on events at Geneva, including the Disarmament Conference.<sup>246</sup> However, Courtney's split from WILPF was 'not on any matters of principle, but only by the matter of method', in particular the relationship between national sections and the international executive.<sup>247</sup> Moreover, she worked more closely with the LNU in the mid-1930s. Increasingly, Courtney supported the ideas for an international police force and from 1939 supported the war effort.<sup>248</sup> For Courtney, the biggest threat to democracy and feminism, was fascism, thus she couched her support of the war in the terms of a 'feminist crusade'.<sup>249</sup> Courtney's close friend, Maude Royden, however, maintained an absolute pacifist stance and returned to WIL's Executive Committee in 1933 after an absence of ten years, although she had been active in WIL's campaigns throughout the interwar years. Royden supported the idea of a 'Peace Army' to intervene in conflicts, in response to the situation in the Far East between China and Japan. Influenced by her Christian faith, Royden's pacifism was absolute – 'war is wrong'.<sup>250</sup> In the late 1930s, Royden joined the Peace Pledge Union (PPU) but soon after the outbreak of war, her beliefs took an about-turn. She resigned from the PPU, convinced that German fascism 'was worse than war'.<sup>251</sup>

In contrast, Swanwick championed an absolute form of pacifism. Recurring bouts of ill health necessitated Swanwick's resignation and she withdrew from most of her public

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<sup>246</sup> Kathleen Courtney, 'Disarmament: The Crisis at the League', *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1934), p. 3.

<sup>247</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1935), p. 3.

<sup>248</sup> Gottlieb, 'The Women's Movement Took a Wrong Turning', p. 453; Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 284.

<sup>249</sup> Gottlieb, 'The Women's Movement Took the Wrong Turning', p. 453.

<sup>250</sup> A. Herbert Gray, A. Maude Royden, H.R.L. Sheppard, Letter to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations, 25 February 1932. TWL@LSE, 7AMR/2/82.

<sup>251</sup> Maude Royden quoted in Gottlieb, 'The Women's Movement Took a Wrong Turning', p. 458.



work during the 1930s.<sup>252</sup> WIL was disheartened to receive Swanwick's resignation – Courtney wrote that 'the W.I.L. owes its whole existence to you'.<sup>253</sup> In 1938, Swanwick resigned completely from WIL, stating that the 'policies proposed are totally impracticable'.<sup>254</sup> Swanwick based her pacifism on her belief in international co-operation through a strong League of Nations, and encouraged knowledge and understanding of international affairs. In particular, Swanwick objected to the treatment of Germany after the Great War and promoted reconciliation. She criticised attitudes to Germany, writing that 'it seemed as if blind panic about Germany, so lately disarmed, trampled and spat upon by the victorious Allies, had taken the place of reason'.<sup>255</sup> Swanwick continued to write regularly for WIL's *Monthly News Sheet* and published a range of pamphlets on international relations after her retirement in 1930. In *New Wars for Old* Swanwick criticised the Great Powers for not instilling confidence in the League from its formation.<sup>256</sup> She also wrote about the threat posed to the home by a defensive air force. Nonetheless, the question of how to prevent war in the face of aggression raised debates about the use of sanctions within the peace movement.<sup>257</sup> Swanwick argued that sanctions were in fact another means of declaring war.<sup>258</sup>

The 'wide divergence of view' between Swanwick – whose ideas deeply influenced WIL during its formative years – and WIL in the 1930s is represented clearly in the debate over sanctions and the value of collective security.<sup>259</sup> WIL did 'to a degree, believe in

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<sup>252</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 488.

<sup>253</sup> K. D. Courtney to H. M. Swanwick, 15 April 1930. SCPC, Helena Swanwick, CDG-B, Great Britain, Box 1.

<sup>254</sup> H.M. Swanwick to K. E. Innes, 3 April 1938. SCPC, Helena Swanwick, CDG-B, Great Britain, Box 1.

<sup>255</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 489.

<sup>256</sup> Swanwick, *New Wars for Old*, p. 1.

<sup>257</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, p. 147.

<sup>258</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, *Pooled Security: What Does it Mean?* (London: WIL, 1934), p. 10. SCPC, Helena Swanwick, CDG-B, Great Britain.

<sup>259</sup> K. E. Innes to H. M. Swanwick, 21 April 1938. SCPC, Helena Swanwick, CDG-B, Great Britain.

Sanctions, and our problem is to decide what kind of Sanctions are useful and desirable'.<sup>260</sup> Although WIL continued to advocate disarmament as the most effective means of providing security and peace, the association favoured an oil embargo on Italy, in response to its aggression towards Abyssinia. The Executive Committee also prompted its members to study the question of non-military sanctions. WIL argued that sanctions 'may become an important "temporary tool" to check aggression, and give time to examine the causes of the dispute'.<sup>261</sup> WIL advocated prohibition of the export of arms to an aggressor, as well as the suspension of loans, credit and provision of other materials useful for war.<sup>262</sup> The association believed that sanctions could prevent war, arguing that an 'oil embargo would have stopped Italy'.<sup>263</sup> Swanwick, however, concluded that the League of Nations was 'doomed to failure' because it maintained a provision to wage war through sanctions.<sup>264</sup> Peace, she argued, would be arrived at through a peaceful state of mind – an 'ethical faith' – free trade and transit, and greater international co-operation.<sup>265</sup> WIL's *News Sheet* continued to advertise Swanwick's work on foreign affairs, encouraging its readers to consult her texts and the association valued her expertise on foreign relations.<sup>266</sup> Edith Pye wrote to Swanwick asking her to 'use your able brain to develop' the theory of non-military sanctions.<sup>267</sup>

WIL recognised the difficulty in classifying sanctions into 'military' and 'non-military', accepting that the use of non-military measures 'may ultimately lead to force'.<sup>268</sup> Ceadel demonstrates that the 'illusion of non-military sanctions collapsed' when faced with the triple crises of 1936 – the remilitarization of the Rhineland, the outbreak of the

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<sup>260</sup> WIL, 'The W.I.L. Special Council', *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1934), p. 2.

<sup>261</sup> Ibid.

<sup>262</sup> WIL, Annual Council Meeting (March 1933), p. 2. WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>263</sup> WIL, 'The Retreat from Sanctions', *Monthly News Sheet* (July 1936), p. 1.

<sup>264</sup> Swanwick, *Collective Insecurity*, p. 16.

<sup>265</sup> Ibid., pp. 261–272.

<sup>266</sup> Ashworth, 'Feminism, War and the Prospects for Peace', p. 40.

<sup>267</sup> E. M. Pye to H.M. Swanwick, 12 January 1934. SCPC, Helena Swanwick, CDG-B, Great Britain, Box 1.

<sup>268</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1934), p. 2.

Spanish Civil War and the defeat of Abyssinia.<sup>269</sup> Similarly, Liddington argues that the consensus within the women's peace movement crumbled following the international crises during the 1930s.<sup>270</sup> WIL criticised the British Government's decision to abandon the use of economic sanctions through the League of Nations in 1936, which, it argued, 'marks a fresh step in a policy leading away from the whole conception of the League'.<sup>271</sup>

Divides within both WILPF and WIL over its response to fascism and the question of sanctions threatened the unity within both the international association and the British section. Despite these difficulties, in the late 1930s, WIL reported an increase in its membership and reported that its branches 'have never been more active than they are at present'.<sup>272</sup> Indeed, Ceadel notes that after Hitler's accession to power in 1933, there was a revival in isolationism and absolute pacifism.<sup>273</sup> Simultaneously, fascist sympathisers objected to the prospect of war with Germany. Yet many peace activists shifted towards anti-fascism during the 1930s. Gottlieb argues, however, that feminist pacifists struggled to relinquish their aims for an effective collective security system through the League.<sup>274</sup> Nevertheless, the divides within WILPF were in fact 'running the same strong tides that are tearing at the world'.<sup>275</sup> Divergences also opened up between pacifists, internationalists and left-wing antimilitarists in the wider peace movement.<sup>276</sup> The popularity of both the LNU's Peace Ballot of 1934–5 and the Peace Pledge Union from 1936, which represented starkly different methods to avert the outbreak of war, represent this split. The Ballot – which will be examined in further detail in Chapter Five – provided overwhelming support for the use of sanctions in the face of aggression, yet the Pledge was an absolute

<sup>269</sup> Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, p. 193; Eglin, 'Women Pacifists in Interwar Britain', p. 151.

<sup>270</sup> Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common*, p. 155.

<sup>271</sup> WIL, 'The Retreat from Sanctions', *Monthly News Sheet* (July 1936), p. 1.

<sup>272</sup> WIL, *Twenty-Second Annual Report* (1937), p. 3; WIL, *Twenty-Third Annual Report* (1938), p. 17. WILPF, III, Reel 71.

<sup>273</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 293 & 320.

<sup>274</sup> Gottlieb, 'Broken Friendships', p. 218.

<sup>275</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1936), p. 2.

<sup>276</sup> Brock and Young, *Pacifism in the Twentieth Century*, p. 121.

renunciation of war.<sup>277</sup> The coherence and optimism of the 1920s peace movement crumbled under the pressure of a series of crises and the growing likelihood of war. In this context, it is perhaps not surprising that WILPF came under similar strains.

Gottlieb argues that divisions in WIL ‘exposed the myopic essentialism that took it for granted that womankind was innately pacifistic’.<sup>278</sup> Yet, WIL’s pacifism was based on a radical feminist critique that linked militarism to the oppression of women. In 1919, Swanwick articulated that feminist, pacifist and socialist members of WILPF were united by a common recognition that freedom ‘is at the root of this question of how to settle the disputes of the world’.<sup>279</sup> However, WILPF’s understanding of ‘freedom’ was never clearly defined. A commitment to freedom encompassed the association’s broad goals for equality, social justice, national self-determination, democracy, internationalism and peace, which WILPF national sections sought to balance during the interwar years.<sup>280</sup> Nevertheless, divides between pacifist and pacificist members in the 1930s shed light on the precarious understanding of WIL’s ‘peace and freedom’. For some members, freedom from war and militarism would lead to liberty and equality. Yet for others ‘peace without freedom is a sham’.<sup>281</sup> For these activists, fascism posed the bigger threat to peace and freedom. In 1939, the organisation reported that ‘there was a strong consciousness that the W.I.L.P.F. was concerned for freedom as much as for peace’, but it is clear that the definitions of WILPF’s dual aims were disputed.<sup>282</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Ibid., pp. 124–132.

<sup>278</sup> Gottlieb, ‘The Women’s Movement Took a Wrong Turning’, p. 459.

<sup>279</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, ‘Evening Speech’, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: 141.1.

<sup>280</sup> Anne Marie Pois, ‘“Practical” and Absolute Pacifism in the Early Years of the U.S. Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom’, in Brock and Socknat eds., *Challenge to Mars*, p. 200.

<sup>281</sup> Gertrude Baer, ‘Address’, *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27 to 31, 1937* (Geneva: WILPF, 1937), p. 10. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: 141.2.

<sup>282</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1939), p. 3.

## Conclusion

WIL's interwar campaigns demonstrate the transformation and post-war trajectory of the British women's movement. This association advocated 'active citizenship' through its involvement in the Peace Pilgrimage and the Women's Peace Crusade; urged for women to be heard in international negotiations relating to disarmament; and challenged the male defined boundaries of the international political sphere. WIL's campaigns for peace shed light on the woman-centred peace activism of a vibrant section of the British peace movement, which chose to remain separate from male-dominated anti-war societies.

This chapter has shown how the association constructed an interpretation of international relations based on the role women could play in the political sphere. Moreover, a focus on the Women's Peace Crusade demonstrates continuities with the pre-war suffrage campaign in terms of techniques and key personnel. Although the issues of war, peace and fascism became central concerns for WIL during the interwar years, the organisation's commitment to a woman-centred approach contributed to the vitality of the feminist movement in these years.

The divergence within the association mirrors the problems that faced the wider peace movement in the 1930s. Whilst the departure between those who opposed fascism and those who opposed war divided members at a national and international level, the conflict demonstrates the strength of the organisation as it continued to debate the terms of its feminist pacifism throughout the interwar years; it was able to incorporate a myriad of views. Nonetheless, the 1934 international congress was a crucial moment for WILPF, as it sought to redefine its aims and purpose in the context of international crises. This was not simply a debate between pacifists and anti-fascists, however. The discussions at the 1934 congress were also the culmination of deepening disagreements over how a transnational organisation should function. Tensions between WIL and the international executive over

representation and decision-making led British members to vote on whether to distance itself from WILPF altogether.<sup>283</sup>

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<sup>283</sup> In 1935, WIL voted on whether to become independent from WILPF, but the majority of British members chose to remain affiliated to the international body. WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1935), p. 1.

## Chapter Four

### Constructing an International Women's Organisation

Founded as an international organisation, WILPF worked across national borders to co-ordinate the activity of peace activists. This transnational women's association was committed to international co-operation, law and governance to secure peace and equality, particularly through international institutions, like the League of Nations. In the official report of the 1915 Hague Congress, Emily Hobhouse stated that

the women of the Hague Congress advance a step further and think for the whole world; their aim being no less than a World in Permanent Peace founded on the new order of a complete and dual citizenship – women with men – their field, the nation and the world.<sup>1</sup>

As this statement suggests, members of WILPF were concerned with local, national and international issues and advocated a sense of 'world citizenship'. Jane Addams described the complex relationship between national and international identity as a 'spiritual internationalism which surrounds and completes our national life even as our national life itself surrounds and completes our family life; they do not conflict with patriotism on one side any more than family devotion conflicts with it upon the other'.<sup>2</sup> Thus, WILPF negotiated national and international identities, interests and political spheres. Whilst its members were committed to creating a transnational movement of women, they were also involved with national campaigns. To understand the motivations and activities of WIL, it is essential to examine the construction of the international WILPF and the place of the British section within this international association.

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<sup>1</sup> Emily Hobhouse, 'Foreword', *Bericht-Rapport-Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>2</sup> Jane Addams, 'President's Address', *Bericht-Rapport-Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

For most WILPF members, national interests, loyalty and identity influenced their international activism – it was impossible to disentangle the nation from internationalism. Yet, there were some exceptions. For instance, Hungarian feminist, Rosika Schwimmer distanced herself from any form of national identity, declaring ‘I have no sense of nationalism, only a cosmic consciousness of belonging to the human family’.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Schwimmer was often considered ‘avant-garde’ by WILPF and became increasingly isolated from the association during the interwar years.<sup>4</sup>

This chapter will examine how WILPF constructed an international women’s organisation by analysing its understanding of ‘internationalism’. In particular, this chapter will focus on the relationship between WILPF’s international executive based in Geneva and the British national section. Some scholars have pointed out that WILPF differed from existing international women’s organisations as it created its own national sections. The ICW and IWSA incorporated existing women’s societies into an international forum.<sup>5</sup> There has been no study of the British national section of WIL, which had a unique and, at times, tense relationship with the international executive. As mentioned earlier, most work on WILPF focuses on the international organisation or the US national section.<sup>6</sup> WIL and WILPF differed over the issue of representation and how best to structure a transnational women’s association, which came to a head in 1935 when WIL members voted on whether the section should leave the international organisation to become an autonomous women’s association.

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<sup>3</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (July 1929), p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Werntznig, ‘Out of Her Time? Rosika Schwimmer’s Transnational Activism after the First World War’, p. 4.; Dagmar Wernitznig, “‘It Is a Strange Thing Not to Belong to Any Country, as Is My Case Now’” Fascism, Refugees, Statelessness, and Rosika Schwimmer (1877-1948)’, *Deportate Esuli Profughe*, 27 (2015), pp. 102–8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid., p. 206; Susan Zimmermann, ‘The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women’s Movement: The Habsburg Monarchy and the Development of Feminist Inter/National Politics’, *Journal of Women’s History*, 17:2 (2005), p. 108.

<sup>6</sup> See page 5.



This chapter will also explore how internationalism worked on a practical level through correspondence and congresses, as well as considering the implications of funding a transnational venture. WIL also had to balance national, international and imperial interests. WIL – which as a British organisation had a special interest in the British Empire – was particularly concerned with the campaigns for national self-determination in India and Ireland. This chapter will demonstrate how national and international ideals propelled and hindered WIL's internationalism during the interwar years.

### ***Transnational activism***

A growing field of literature explores the complexities of transnationalism. Patricia Clavin has identified, what she calls, a transnational 'paradox'. She argues that 'transnational networks and epistemic communities need coherent nations and intergovernmental cooperation to have its biggest impact'.<sup>7</sup> Transnational networks do not simply transcend and subsume national borders; they acknowledge and incorporate them. In comparison, Rupp has demonstrated that nationalism and internationalism were, on the whole, complementary ideals in the international women's movement. For instance, women in countries under colonial rule often considered national self-determination to be a pre-requisite for their internationalism.<sup>8</sup> Moreover, Susan Zimmermann argues that the international women's movement was founded on the notion that nation-states or federal states were the basis of international organisation.<sup>9</sup> Although WILPF radically differed from its predecessors – ICW and IAWSEC – in its support for national self-determination and was, arguably, more transnational in its structure and outlook, prevailing ideas about the nation and the hegemony of colonial powers influenced the association.<sup>10</sup> The

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<sup>7</sup> Clavin, 'Conceptualising Internationalism', p. 5.

<sup>8</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 122.

<sup>9</sup> Zimmermann, 'The Challenge of Multinational Empire', p. 87.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 108–9.

association continued to negotiate the implications of its internationalism throughout the interwar years.

The opening of the League of Nations in 1920 marked a new era in international co-operation, based on a new spirit of internationalism catalysed by the devastation of the Great War.<sup>11</sup> International non-governmental organisations were also formed and became popular during the period. For example, humanitarian associations such as the Save the Children Fund and the International Committee of the Red Cross negotiated both national and international political spheres.<sup>12</sup> Emily Baughan argues that campaigns by Save the Children demonstrate the shifts in the ‘popular imagined geographies of interwar Britain’, towards an internationalist perspective.<sup>13</sup> In comparison, Helen McCarthy has illustrated the internationalisation and democratisation of British society through popular organisations, particularly the LNU.<sup>14</sup> This analysis of WIL places the association in the active British political culture of the 1920s and 1930s, which was motivated and inspired by internationalism to promote peace.

The ideals of internationalism, citizenship and democratization particularly appealed to women’s organisations.<sup>15</sup> Indeed, the concept of international citizenship increased with pace towards the end of the nineteenth century, which, Heloise Brown argues, was reflected in the growing ‘popular appeal’ of pacifism, humanitarianism and internationalism within the women’s movement.<sup>16</sup> During the interwar period, international

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<sup>11</sup> Steiner, *The Lights That Failed*, p. 349.

<sup>12</sup> Heather Jones, ‘International or Transnational? Humanitarian Action during the First World War’, *European Review of History*, 16 (2009), pp. 697–713.

<sup>13</sup> Emily Baughan, “‘Every Citizen of Empire Implored to Save the Children!’ Empire, Internationalism and the Save the Children Fund in Inter-War Britain’, *Historical Research*, 86:231 (2013), pp. 117.

<sup>14</sup> McCarthy, ‘Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics’, pp. 891–912.

<sup>15</sup> McCarthy, ‘Democratizing British Foreign Policy’, p. 372.

<sup>16</sup> Brown, *The Truest Form of Patriotism*, p. 183; Sluga, ‘Female and National Self-Determination’, p. 495.

non-governmental organisations influenced the League and community of international actors in Geneva.<sup>17</sup>

Despite the growing popularity of internationalism and international associations, national contexts and rising nationalism, as well as the issues surrounding imperialism hampered the grand aims of transnational organisations.<sup>18</sup> Both Baughan and McCarthy have demonstrated the overlap between international, national and imperial interests in voluntary associations during the period.<sup>19</sup> WILPF aimed to create international women's organisation through its common goals for women's rights and peace. Yet, Marie Sandell has demonstrated the tensions and difficulties in creating a transnational network of women based on the concept of 'international sisterhood'. She argues that international women's associations often operated in the tradition of 'Western' suffrage movements and reflected notions of colonial and civilizational hierarchies and distinctions.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, 'Western' women dominated the Executive Committees of international women's organisations.<sup>21</sup> Yet, Sandell also demonstrates the attempts made to overcome the hegemony of the 'West' through the expansion of regional women's organisations, which incorporated women from the 'East', such as the British Commonwealth League and the Pan-Pacific Women's Association.<sup>22</sup> WILPF was also a prominent critic of colonialism and sought to reach out to women beyond the 'West'.<sup>23</sup> However, it is important to understand the impact of national and imperial interests and influences on the association.

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<sup>17</sup> Davies, 'A "Great Experiment" of the League of Nations Era', p. 410.

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Richard Davies, 'Internationalism in a Divided World: The Experience of the International Federation of League of Nations Societies, 1919–1939', *Peace and Change*, 37:2 (2012), pp. 227–52.

<sup>19</sup> Emily Baughan, 'The Imperial War Relief Fund and the All British Appeal: Commonwealth, Conflict and Conservatism within the British Humanitarian Movement, 1920–25', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40:5 (2012), p. 849.

<sup>20</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup> Sandell, "'A Real Meeting of the Women of the East and the West'", p. 175; Goodman, 'International Citizenship and the International Federation of University Women', p. 709.

<sup>22</sup> Sandell, 'Regional versus International', p. 607.

<sup>23</sup> Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism', p. 204.

### **WIL's internationalism**

Offen describes WILPF as 'undoubtedly the most ambitious, broadest-scope international women's organization in operation during the interwar period'.<sup>24</sup> The 1920s and 1930s witnessed a wealth of activity by and for women at the transnational level. Alongside WILPF, IWSA and ICW, organisations such as Equal Rights International, Young Women's Christian Association, the Women's Christian Temperance Union, Open Door International, the International Federation of University Women and the International Women's Co-operative Guild were founded to co-ordinate women's international activism. In addition, associations formed alliances, resulting in the formation of supra-international women's organisations including the Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organisations, Standing Joint Committee of Women's International Organisations, and Liaison Committee of International Women's Organisations. These umbrella groups of women's transnational activism focused on particular shared concerns and attempted to unite women's efforts to lobby the League of Nations. The IWSA incorporated existing national suffrage societies into its federal structure. For example, the NUWSS became the British section of IWSA. Similarly, the ICW created a broad umbrella group of national women's organisations. In contrast, rejecting a structure based on the amalgamation of existing national societies, WILPF's national sections were branches of the transnational women's peace organisation. Shortly, following the 1915 Hague congress, national sections of the ICWPP – later renamed WILPF – were founded in Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Offen, *European Feminsims*, p. 360.

<sup>25</sup> WILPF, 'Reports of the National Sections', *International Congress of Women held at Zurich, May 12–17, 1919* (1921), p. 2. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

However, the concept of ‘internationalism’ was a ‘vaguely defined force’ within the international women’s movement.<sup>26</sup> Internationalism took a number of different forms, including support for international institutions, socialist internationalism and intellectual internationalism. The concept was diffuse and interpretations often overlapped.<sup>27</sup> Some members of WILPF spoke of a ‘spiritual internationalism’.<sup>28</sup> At other times, the organisation defined internationalism in terms of ‘human unity and the interdependence of nations’.<sup>29</sup> WILPF believed it was ‘especially important for us at the moment to be aware of the ties that bind humanity together – not merely in a sentimental way, but with a direct application to the problems that confront the world’.<sup>30</sup> Thus, internationalism was both an idea and a practical method for organising the world. For this reason, Offen argues that it is appropriate to describe international women’s organisations as ‘transnational’ as their ‘internationalism’ incorporated inter-governmental relations, international co-operation and networks that transcended national borders.<sup>31</sup> WILPF’s internationalism did not deny the importance of nation-states.

As Glenda Sluga notes, links between nationalism and internationalism were demonstrated and imagined through language, race and national differences during the twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> These connections and differences also played out in the international women’s movement, particularly at international congresses.<sup>33</sup> Yet, the relationship between WILPF’s international executive and national sections prompted heated debate amongst its members, as they negotiated the terms and structure of its internationalism.

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<sup>26</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 108.

<sup>27</sup> Laqua, *The Age of Internationalism*, pp. 3–4.

<sup>28</sup> Jane Addams, ‘Presidential Address’, *Bericht–Rapport–Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II, Reel 141.1.

<sup>29</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1922), p. 1.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Offen, ‘Understanding International Feminism’, p. 27.

<sup>32</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, p. 3.

<sup>33</sup> Bosch, ‘Between Entertainment and Nationalist Politics: The Uses of Folklore in the Spectacle of the International Woman Suffrage Alliance’.

International headquarters in Geneva facilitated much of WILPF's international work.<sup>34</sup> As has been previously noted, Maison Internationale was set up in 1920 to be close to the centre of international politics and run by various members of WILPF's Executive Committee and office staff. The Maison served as an 'international social centre' – which provided hospitality for associates and a venue for public meetings, reading groups and lectures.<sup>35</sup> In addition, Maison Internationale allowed WILPF to develop relations with the various international political and philanthropic organisations also based in Geneva.<sup>36</sup> Swanwick described Geneva as the 'city of dreams' and WILPF were well placed to lobby the League of Nations Secretariat and the Assembly, which met regularly in the city.<sup>37</sup> Susan Pedersen explores the networks at Geneva, which permitted voluntary non-governmental organisations access to the League of Nations.<sup>38</sup> WIL 'could scarcely over-estimate the political value' of the international headquarters in Geneva for its international work, which also included cooperative efforts with other international women's organisations.<sup>39</sup>

### **Organising internationalism**

Scholars of transnationalism have demonstrated that national structures are vital to the creation of international networks.<sup>40</sup> Yet, Marie Sandell asserts that WILPF was less attached to the traditional nation-state structure than other international women's organisations. WILPF was committed to the principles of national self-determination and permitted branches in countries that were not independent states, such as the Irishwomen's

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<sup>34</sup> Miller, "Geneva—the Key to Equality", p. 220.

<sup>35</sup> Emily Balch, 'Report of the Secretary-Treasurer', *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10 to 17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 192. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 412.

<sup>38</sup> Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations', p. 1113.

<sup>39</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: WIL, 1925), p. 4. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>40</sup> Clavin, 'Conceptualising Internationalism', p. 5; Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, p. 150.

International League.<sup>41</sup> That being said, WILPF's internationalism did not seek to completely transcend national borders. National issues, concerns and identities influenced most sections of the association, particularly those where the question of self-determination was in doubt. For example, republicanism was a point of contention for the Irish section. The issue of nationalism had particular ramifications for women in Czecho-slovakia. Both a Czecho-Slovak and a German branch were formed due to nationalist sentiments. The branches co-operated through a central committee. Nevertheless, Maria Aull – the representative from the German Czecho-Slovakian branch at WILPF's 1924 International Congress – described how their 'most important task is the development of understanding between the nationalities in our own country'.<sup>42</sup> Debates on nationality, minorities and self-determination appeared regularly at WILPF congresses. Yet, in 1929, the association altered its position on the establishment of 'national' sections; permitting only one section per nation, colony or dominion.<sup>43</sup>

The organisation of sections along national lines conformed to the traditional nation-state structure, which mirrored the League of Nation's own structure. At times, nationalism threatened the creation of an international body of women, particularly in Eastern Europe where WILPF made several attempts made to establish sections, with limited success. French WILPF member, Camille Drevet undertook a WILPF-sponsored mission to Eastern Europe and the Balkans in 1929. She urged WILPF to 'understand the great strength of the nationalist ideal in all these countries and try to get this devotion to the national cause which is sometimes exclusive to evolve towards another conception viz.

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<sup>41</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 53.

<sup>42</sup> WILPF, 'Proceedings', *Report for the Fourth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, US Section, 1927), p. 8. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II, Reel 141.1.

<sup>43</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 113.

the place of each country in international life'.<sup>44</sup> Thus, WILPF's internationalism complemented nationalism. National identities should be included in the international spirit. However, the association continued to negotiate how internationalism worked in practice. For instance, the British WIL discussed the appropriate method of an organisation like WILPF and deliberated over the national composition of its own membership from 1919 onwards.

The constitution of WIL stated that 'British subjects' were eligible to become full members of the national section.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, preventing like-minded foreign women living in Britain – who were not British subjects – from joining WIL; they could, however, enjoy 'friendly fellowship' from their British counterparts.<sup>46</sup> Associate membership of WILPF was open to all women and provided a link to WILPF's international office through a subscription to WILPF's journal *Pax International*. Yet, associates did not enjoy full membership rights and could not vote at WILPF international congresses. Male supporters could also become 'associate members' of WIL. The subscription records of 1924 indicate that eleven women and eleven men paid subscriptions to be associate members.<sup>47</sup> A number of married couples paid subscriptions. For example, 'Mr and Mrs Pethick Lawrence' regularly donated £25 to WIL.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, preventing foreign women from joining WIL because of their nationality reaffirmed national divides within the association. Non-British women were restricted from joining WIL and it was difficult for women to be involved with WILPF where no national section existed.

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<sup>44</sup> Camille Drevet, 'Report on the Mission to Eastern Europe and the Balkans', *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Prague, 14 to 28 August 1929* (WILPF: Geneva, c. 1929). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>45</sup> WIL, Minutes of the Inaugural Conference of the Women's International League, 30 October to 1 November 1915, p. 2. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: WIL, 1925), pp. 24–31. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.



At the 1919 Council meeting, the Liverpool branch raised an objection to the 'British subject' clause of the association's membership. Dr Alice Ker of the Liverpool WIL moved a motion to substitute the article for one that stated 'Membership shall be open to all women who accept the above object'.<sup>49</sup> Ker appealed to the WIL Council on two grounds. First, she argued that 'since the declaration of Peace' the clause 'is no longer necessary'. Second, she pointed out that British women married to foreigners, who lose their nationality upon marriage, would not be able to join WIL.<sup>50</sup> Thus, she appealed to both WIL's commitment to internationalism and its campaign for the nationality of married women. Although Lady Courtney seconded the Liverpool motion, the Council decided that the issue should be referred to the jurisdiction of the International Executive Committee. There were supporters of the 'British subjects' clause. Some members argued that admitting 'members of a nation with which we are on strained relations on' would undermine WIL's national work. Perhaps the memory of widespread jingoism and anti-German sentiment during the Great War influenced the more conservative members of WIL, who wanted to create a respected association in the aftermath of war, free from association with the 'enemy'. Criticised in the press as unpatriotic for their collaboration with German women, leading members of WIL felt that their action 'would have much more weight' if their membership was British.<sup>51</sup> The Council voted in favour of keeping WIL's membership 'purely British'.<sup>52</sup>

The following year, the Edinburgh branch raised the issue again, proposing that 'as part of a world-wide organisation of democratic ideals' WIL 'should admit to its membership on equal terms, the women of all nations'.<sup>53</sup> This Edinburgh proposal

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<sup>49</sup> WIL, Annual Council Meeting, 30-31 October 1919, p. 4. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> WIL, Preliminary Agenda of Council Meeting, October 14 and 15, 1920. WILPF MF, III, Reel 68.

appealed to WIL's core values of internationalism and democracy. The debates on the question of 'British' membership demonstrates the autonomy of WIL's local branches. These branches questioned WIL's the form and function of internationalism, highlighting the divergences between local branches and the national leadership. Membership to WIL remained on national lines: the 1937 WIL constitution stipulated that 'membership shall be open to all women who are British subjects.'<sup>54</sup> Nonetheless, these debates signal some of the difficulties and tensions inherent in organising an international association. Members continued to discuss the structure of the association and the internationalism of WILPF as an organisation.

### *A World Section*

A group of WIL members supported a proposal to create a world section of WILPF, which would allow members from all nationalities to join. Sophia Sturge, a prominent Quaker reformer was 'anxious to be International, rather than to join any national organization' in order to maintain 'the spirit of internationalism'.<sup>55</sup> Sturge believed that an international organisation should refrain from organising itself on national lines. Provision for such a section had been included in the original constitution of WILPF – a global branch had to have more than one hundred individuals from at least five different countries in participation. Notably, the constitution would not allow women to become a member of both a national section and the world section simultaneously.<sup>56</sup> Support for a world section arose periodically throughout the interwar years. In 1924, Vilma Glücklich and Madeleine Rolland – of the Hungarian and Swiss WILPF branches, respectively – initiated a world section at the organisation's fourth international congress, held in Washington D.C.

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<sup>54</sup> WIL, Yearly Report 1937 (London: International House, c. 1938), p. 22. WILPF MF, III, Reel 71.

<sup>55</sup> Sophia Sturge to Aletta Jacobs, November 1915. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>56</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (January 1930), p. 2.

However, insufficient numbers of women joined the world section and it disbanded by the time of the next international congress held in Dublin two years later.<sup>57</sup>

In 1930, another proposal for a world section gathered momentum. Madeleine Doty – a US WILPF member and editor of *Pax International* – laid out the advantages of a world section in *Pax*, emphasising the ‘need for a body of women who shall call themselves world citizens and dedicate themselves solely to world affairs and the service of humanity’.<sup>58</sup> Doty did not envisage the recruitment of all WILPF members to the section, nor would the world section supersede the work of existing national sections. She believed that for most women the path to internationalism should remain through national sections, which should remain a vital part of WILPF’s work.<sup>59</sup> However, the form of the potential world section raised a number of concerns. Many activists were anxious that it would deplete national sections of their most eminent members, who might opt to join the world branch. In addition, objectors argued that a world section would overlook the importance of different national contexts. Many WILPF members believed that peace would only be secured through tolerance of different national cultures and a system of mutual interdependence.<sup>60</sup> For many WILPF members, a commitment to internationalism did not supersede their national identities or interests. Divisions within WILPF over the form that internationalism should take stalled the progress of a world section.

In the context of the international crises of the 1930s, support for the world section once again gained ground. In particular, members from national sections that were prohibited from functioning pushed the ideas as a means of creating solidarity and unity in the face of adversity. During the 1930s, the German and Italian branches folded due to an

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<sup>57</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (November 1926), p. 6.

<sup>58</sup> Madeleine Z. Doty, ‘The W.I.L. World Section’, *Pax International* (January 1930), p. 2.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (April 1930), p. 2.

inhospitable political climate in those countries.<sup>61</sup> At WILPF's eighth international congress in 1934, the procedures for forming a world section were simplified – allowing a branch to be formed by fifty women from three different countries.<sup>62</sup> Yet, a world section did not materialise.

Proponents of the world section believed that it would ensure true internationalism and represent an 'international consciousness'.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, the association continued to be organised through its national sections. Some women did opt to donate to the international headquarters of WILPF to become international associate members, whilst continuing to pay subscriptions to their national section. In practical terms, organising an international association was difficult and the form of WILPF's internationalism raised questions. Establishing the association on the structure of national and local sections was a logical method of including women in different countries. National sections had the scope to include more women than a distant headquarters in Geneva and thus introduce women to international politics. The structure of WILPF's sections and debates over how a transnational organisation should be formed reflect the tempestuous relationship between the national and international. WILPF members discussed whether their organisation should transcend national borders or incorporate them. This process helped to forge the collective identity of WILPF, as it continued to work out how to define what it meant by feminist internationalism.<sup>64</sup> Yet, the balance between the national and international focus of WILPF's national sections was in flux during the interwar years, as national political contexts influenced the work of national sections.

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<sup>61</sup> The German and Italian sections ceased to exist in the 1930s due to the pressures of fascist governments, Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 116. In comparison, Joyce Goodman notes that the German, Italian and Portuguese national branches of the International Federation of University Women ceased activity during the 1930s due to the 'political proscriptions of their governments', Goodman, 'International Citizenship and the International Federation of University Women', p. 703.

<sup>62</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (July–August 1934), p. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism', p. 209.

<sup>64</sup> Rupp, 'Constructing Internationalism', p. 1571.

### ***Funding an international women's organisation***

The international organisation relied on its national sections for donations to fund its international work, particularly the organisation of its international biennial congresses. Thus, funding was reliant on the size of national sections, but also political and economic circumstances. British, German and Dutch women, in equal parts, financed the initial congress at The Hague, with smaller donations received from delegates of the other nine nations present at the meetings.<sup>65</sup> From the 1919 congress onwards, the US section contributed most of the funds for international congresses.<sup>66</sup> In 1921, all national sections were obliged to donate a tenth of their subscriptions to the headquarters in Geneva, as well as organising additional fund-raising activities to boost the funds of the international WILPF.<sup>67</sup> That year, WILPF national sections donated 89,126 Swiss Francs to the cost of the organisation's international congress held in Vienna. The majority of these funds came from the US national section, which contributed a significant 70,480 Swiss Francs to the congress fund.<sup>68</sup> National sections financed most of WILPF's international work, yet the association also encouraged existing members to subscribe individually to the international headquarters as a means of raising extra revenue for its work at Maison Internationale. This incentive doubled the number of international associate members between 1925 and 1926 from 114 to 226.<sup>69</sup> The number of international associate members remained low during the period and it is important to note that these international members were already

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<sup>65</sup> WPP, *Report of the International Congress of Women* (USA: Roy G. Harper, 1915), p. 3. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>66</sup> The accounts of WILPF's second international congress show that the Women's Peace Party, which became the US national section of WILPF contributed 66,000 Swiss Francs to the international office. The second largest contribution came from the British section of 9,952 Swiss Francs. WILPF, 'Accounts of the Geneva Office of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>67</sup> WILPF, 'Organisation and Finance', *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10 to 17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 113. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>68</sup> WILPF, 'Financial Report from 1 May 1919 to 30 April 1920', *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10 to 17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 192. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>69</sup> E. G. Balch to K. D. Courtney, 14 February 1927. WILPF, III, Reel 69.

members of their respective national sections.<sup>70</sup> Personal affiliation to WILPF's headquarters could indicate an 'international consciousness' to prioritise the international work of the association amongst its members – for those who could afford to do so.

WILPF was a relatively small organisation in terms of its total membership. In 1926, it reported approximately 50,000 members in forty countries. In 1935, WIL counted 6,000 members.<sup>71</sup> For comparison, other interwar peace societies dwarfed WILPF – for example, the British LNU had 400,000 members and the international body it was affiliated to – the International Federation of League of Nations Societies – boasted 1.5 million members worldwide.<sup>72</sup> WILPF's membership did not bring in large revenues to support its international campaigns and *Pax International* made frequent appeals for additional funds and subscribers.<sup>73</sup> Yet, the association relied heavily on the generosity of its American branches and members to support its work financially, leading Bussey and Tims to assume that the organisation was 'nurtured by America' during the interwar years.<sup>74</sup>

The US branch of WILPF was the principal financial donor towards the international work of WILPF throughout the interwar period. Between 1934 and 1937, contributions to the international treasury from individual associate members from the USA totalled at 25,149 Swiss Francs. In contrast, contributions from associate members

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<sup>70</sup> WILPF reported in 1926 that its total membership stood at 50,000. WILPF, 'International Headquarters Report', *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington: WILPF, 1927). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>71</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 390; WIL, *Nineteenth Yearly Report, March 1934–January 1935* (London: WIL, 1935). WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>72</sup> McCarthy, 'Democratizing British Foreign Policy', p. 358; Davies, 'Internationalism in a Divided World', p. 230.

<sup>73</sup> The Journal made frequent appeal to fund its publication and the running of *Maison International*. For example see, Madeleine Z. Doty, 'Christmas is Coming', *Pax International* (November 1926), p. 2.

<sup>74</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers of Peace*, p. 77.

from all other national sections combined came to 5,328 Swiss Francs.<sup>75</sup> In addition, Bussey and Tims note that ‘Maison Internationale could never have continued to function but for the generosity of Jane Addams, who personally guaranteed a regular sum of five hundred dollars a month to Geneva’.<sup>76</sup> However, Christine Bolt notes that tensions arose within the early Anglo-American women’s suffrage network over the influence of wealthy donors. In particular, she contends that American financial support for international women’s organisations brought an expectation of leadership.<sup>77</sup> Indeed, both WILPF’s interwar Presidents were American and other influential members of WILPF’s Executive Committee were also from the US. In comparison, literature on the American women’s movement seems to suggest that the US Women’s Peace Party founded WILPF in 1915, and somewhat overlooks the influence of the European women, who organised the Hague Congress.<sup>78</sup>

Zimmermann shows that international women’s organisations reflected the shifting patterns of hegemony in the international system, as power and influence moved away from the dominance of the colonial European powers towards the US during the twentieth century.<sup>79</sup> Despite US abstention from the League of Nations, the nation became the chief source of financial lending during the 1920s,<sup>80</sup> and American bankers co-operated with European political leaders to facilitate reconstruction.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, the US provided funds for League activities, for instance, the American Bureau of Social Hygiene funded the investigation into the traffic of women and children in 1923.<sup>82</sup> Tensions between the US

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<sup>75</sup> WILPF, ‘Tableau schématique des Recettes du 1er Juillet 1934 au 30 Juin 1937’, *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27 to 31, 1937* (Geneva: WILPF, 1937). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>76</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers of Peace*, p. 77.

<sup>77</sup> Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned?*, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Foster, *Women for All Seasons*; Foster, *Women and the Warriors*.

<sup>79</sup> Zimmermann, ‘The Challenge of Multinational Empire for the International Women’s Movement’, p. 108.

<sup>80</sup> Steiner, *The Lights That Failed*, p. 440.

<sup>81</sup> Pedersen, ‘Back to the League of Nations’, p. 1097.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1111; Metzger, ‘Towards an International Human Rights Regime’, p. 66.

and European branches of WILPF, based on the American dominance of the organisation, also mirrored the wider interwar shifts in power and the emergence of the United States as a global power.<sup>83</sup> In 1924, a pamphlet called on WIL members to express their gratitude for all that ‘our American sisters ... have helped us with gifts material and spiritual’. This pamphlet advertised the upcoming international congress in Washington D.C. and also suggests a possible power struggle between the European and American leadership of the association, reassuring members that ‘Europe needs America, America needs Europe; Europe, America and all the continents have need of one another’s gifts and of one another’s powers’.<sup>84</sup> Whilst recognising the importance of US financial support for its international work, WIL reasserted the value of its other national branches.

### **The International Executive Committee**

Members of WILPF’s international Executive Committee represented the organisation as a whole, rather than their respective national sections. WILPF hoped to instil a sense of transnationalism, which in theory would overcome the dominance of any one national section.<sup>85</sup> This system aimed to ensure that the committee was international and that its members could speak for WILPF in its entirety. The committee was WILPF’s steering body, members of the committee were elected at international congresses and the committee met twice a year to decide on WILPF procedure and co-ordinate its activity. The authors of WILPF’s constitution hoped that the association could transcend national loyalties and interests.<sup>86</sup>

Nevertheless, women from America and Europe dominated the Executive Committee. For example, the committee of the 1915 Hague congress included feminists

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<sup>83</sup> Steiner, *The Lights that Failed*, p. 183.

<sup>84</sup> WILPF, *Appeal to the Women of the World, International Congress at Washington* (Geneva: WILPF, 1924). WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>85</sup> Vellacott, ‘A Place for Pacifism and Transnationalism’, p. 33.

<sup>86</sup> Vellacott, ‘Feminism as if All People Mattered’, p. 387.



from USA, Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain and Ireland, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden.<sup>87</sup> Despite its wider reach in 1925 – including national sections in Japan, Eastern Europe, Australia, New Zealand, and Haiti, plus additional links with corresponding societies across Europe, and North and South America – the international executive was drawn from the USA, Britain, Belgium, Austria, the Netherlands, Germany, France and Switzerland.<sup>88</sup> Similarly, Gertrud Baer (Germany) and Edith Pye (Great Britain) chaired the Executive Committee in the early 1930s, with other members hailing from USA, France, Austria, Switzerland, the Netherlands, Sweden and Czecho-slovakia.<sup>89</sup> Heloise Brown argues that early international women's organisations 'relied upon identifiable core members and organisations to create the sense of an imagined international community'.<sup>90</sup> As indicated above, the national make-up of WILPF's leading committee changed very little over the period and the association was organised by a core group of women, including British members Helena Swanwick, Catherine Marshall, Mary Sheepshanks and Edith Pye – who served periods on the international Executive Committee throughout the interwar years. WIL benefitted from having a constant link to the Executive Committee. Its *Monthly News Sheet* reported in 1927 that Marshall's role as an international Vice President of WILPF helped British members realise the extent of the international reach of WILPF and 'the work of our League the world over'.<sup>91</sup>

Nevertheless, WIL did raise concerns about the structure of WILPF, particularly the issue of representation on the international executive and the autonomy of national sections. British members were concerned about the centralised power of WILPF and

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<sup>87</sup> WILPF, 'International Committee of the Congress', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920), p. 21. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>88</sup> WILPF, *Executive Committee* (June 1925). WILPF, I:B, Reel 9.

<sup>89</sup> WILPF, *Executive Committee* (July 1933). WILPF, I:A, Reel 2.

<sup>90</sup> Brown, *The Truest Form of Patriotism*, p. 159.

<sup>91</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1927), p. 1.

believed that ‘National Sections should be given the widest latitude to lay emphasis on various aspects of our work’.<sup>92</sup> Tensions between the British section and the international executive simmered throughout the period – WIL was keen to have a certain level of autonomy over its own agenda and freedom to act without the delay caused by the decision-making process by the international Executive Committee. In November 1924, Kathleen Courtney – WIL’s Chair – addressed a letter to Vilma Glücklich – WILPF’s International Secretary – in which she asserted the British section’s desire for more independence from the international executive. Courtney highlighted ‘that it is difficult if not impossible, to carry on international work on the same lines as national work’, noting the time lag in decisions made at the international level, urging that national sections should be able to act more freely.<sup>93</sup>

WIL also questioned the make-up of the international committee, arguing that national representatives from each section should be elected to the committee to increase the representation of each WILPF branch. In 1928, the British section passed a resolution stating that ‘the best way to form the International Committee is that the Congress should elect a certain number (the number not specified) and that the National Sections should each elect or appoint one member’.<sup>94</sup> WIL believed that for WILPF to succeed in its future work, more control must be given to the national sections, which ‘must help to mould the organisation’.<sup>95</sup> Vehement opposition to the British proposal came from French WILPF member, Gabrielle Duchêne, who feared that national sections would undermine the internationalism of WILPF. Yet, WIL asserted that ‘each nationality has its own contribution to make to the international spirit, that each is different and that we should each bring our national contribution of international spirit to the Board with charity and

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<sup>92</sup> H. M. Swanwick to E. G. Balch, 25 September 1919. WILPF, I:A, Reel 1.

<sup>93</sup> K. D. Courtney to V. Glücklich, 13 November 1924. WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>94</sup> To National Sections from the British Section, 25 January 1928, p. 1. WILPF, I:A, Reel 2.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

understanding'.<sup>96</sup> In addition, WIL contended that members elected to the Executive Committee 'if freed from all National pre-occupation' would not be able to speak with the practical experience of 'what was happening in any given country'.<sup>97</sup> WIL members believed their proposal would help WILPF's work for peace, through an appreciation of national circumstances and political contexts. However, WILPF argued that its international Executive Committee would represent national concerns and asserted that 'no member of the International Executive should feel more responsible to her own national section than to any other'.<sup>98</sup> The relationship between national sections and the international executive was 'a question abounding in difficulties' and reveals tensions between different understandings of internationalism and how best to organise transnationally.<sup>99</sup> WIL criticised Duchêne for attempting 'set up an antithesis between 'national' and 'international' which does not and cannot exist in real life'.<sup>100</sup>

Nonetheless, WILPF's Executive Committee retained its original structure. As a compromise, each section elected two national representatives to serve as consultative members to the Executive Committee.<sup>101</sup> The relationship between the British national section and the international Executive Committee became increasingly strained. In 1929, Mary Sheepshanks – WILPF's International Secretary – resigned due to incompatibilities between herself and the French and German members of the executive.<sup>102</sup> In a letter to Edith Pye, Addams expressed her regret that other British members, such as Kathleen Courtney and Hilda Clark were reconsidering their membership of WILPF in light of the

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<sup>96</sup> Ibid, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> WIL, Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, 19 August 1927, p. 2. WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>99</sup> To National Sections from the British Section, 25 January 1928, p. 3. WILPF, I:A, Reel 2.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> WILPF, Constitution (1919). WILPF, I:D, Reel 18.

<sup>102</sup> Mary Sheepshanks, *The Long Day Ended* (typescript, c.1952), p. 160. TWL@LSE, 7MSH, FL642; Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 104.

tensions within the international executive.<sup>103</sup> Addams also agreed that ‘more liberty must be given the national sections and that an exercise of arbitrary power is as useless as it may be inimical to the very existence of the W.I.L.’.<sup>104</sup> Courtney resigned from the presidency of the British section in 1933 due to the incompatibilities between the international executive and WIL, especially the resistance to the British proposal to strengthen the representation of the national sections.<sup>105</sup>

WILPF’s eighth international congress was called earlier than planned in September 1934 in Zurich to resolve the divisions within WILPF.<sup>106</sup> Clara Ragaz opened the congress acknowledging that ‘differences in our political outlook have become accentuated and our needs as to certain fundamental principles governing our methods or work are not the same’.<sup>107</sup> Two issues dominated the discussions: the question of violence, and concerns over representation within the organisation. Divides between WILPF’s core members opened up on these issues. The French and German members of WILPF were increasingly radical in their anti-fascist stance and argued that the structure of WILPF should continue to empower the international executive to provide effective leadership. Alternatively, the British, American and Scandinavian branches favoured strengthening the national sections. The British branch advocated that national and local levels of the association should lead and inform the activity of the international women’s organisation. This reflects WIL’s conception of ‘internationalism’ as an amalgamation of national interests and identities, rather than a means of transcending differences through a sense of

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<sup>103</sup> Edith Pye was a British WIL member and served as an international chair of WILPF between 1932 and 1934.

<sup>104</sup> J. Addams to E. M. Pye, 17 August 1932. TWL@LSE, 7KDC/D/1/5–6.

<sup>105</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1933), p. 1.

<sup>106</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (May 1934), p. 1.

<sup>107</sup> Clara Ragaz, ‘Problems resulting for the Work and Methods of the W.I.L.P.F.’, *Eighth International Congress: Minutes of Proceedings, Zurich, September 3 to 8, 1934*, p. 6. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

transnational unity, which came into conflict with other members' understanding of 'internationalism'.

In particular, WIL objected to the international executive taking decisions without the consultation of national sections. WIL argued that national sections should have increased autonomy and control over the work of WILPF. WIL believed that a 'serious difficulty remains that action taken by the International Executive is sometimes in conflict with the policy of a Section and may prejudice its work'.<sup>108</sup> The British section argued that the Executive Committee should seek the approval of all national sections to reach a consensus before taking any action. However, the majority of the Executive Committee did not accept the British resolution, fearing such a proposal would 'hamper useful and rapid action', particularly in the context of the worsening international political situation.<sup>109</sup> Moreover, Edith Pye found it increasingly difficult to work with certain members of the association, particularly Gabrielle Duchêne and Gertrude Baer. In an attempt to heal the rift, WILPF chose Clara Ragaz of Switzerland as a third Chair – alongside Pye and Baer – to act as a neutral mediator between the existing German and British co-chairs.<sup>110</sup>

Catherine Marshall attempted to present both sides of the debate in a memorandum to the British section following Courtney's resignation as WIL's President. She argued that the 'difference is not, as I see it, a difference that divides one National Section from another, but a difference that exists to a greater or lesser degree within every national section and on the International Executive itself'.<sup>111</sup> Marshall attributed the divisions in WILPF to 'temperament' and 'national circumstances and experience', explaining how continental branches of WILPF had been exposed to different political ideologies –

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<sup>108</sup> British Section to the Members of the International Executive Committee, 27 January 1933. WILPF, I:A, Reel 2.

<sup>109</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1933), p. 3.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid.

<sup>111</sup> Catherine Marshall, Notes on the Relation of National Sections to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (c.1933), p. 1. WILPF, I:B, Reel 10.

including socialism and fascism – which influenced their outlook.<sup>112</sup> Nonetheless, she argued that members shared a ‘bond of unity which makes it possible, even if difficult, to accept many of our present difficulties’.<sup>113</sup>

Nonetheless, WIL reported that it found ‘itself out of harmony with the present action of the International Executive Committee’.<sup>114</sup> At the 1935 annual council meeting, WIL debated its commitment to internationalism, posing the question: ‘how far are we prepared, for the sake of our international organisation of our international connection, to jeopardise our national position as a non-party, democratic body, working for disarmament and for a peaceful world order based on law and justice?’.<sup>115</sup> Hilda Clark – WIL’s Honorary Foreign Relations Secretary – proposed that the British section should cease to be the British section of WILPF and become an independent ‘Women’s International League (British Group in correspondence with the W.I.L.P.F.)’.<sup>116</sup> Although the majority of British members did not support this proposal, the debate demonstrates the growing dissatisfaction with the direction of the international Executive Committee. WIL ‘felt that it is intolerable that decisions and pronouncements should be made in the name of the whole League by a small group of people with whose outlook and political judgement they profoundly disagree’.<sup>117</sup> Yet, ‘the international aspect of the [our] League seemed to the Manchester Branch the most important fact and one that must be clung to tenaciously’ and the section remained part of WILPF.<sup>118</sup> Disagreements between WIL and the international Executive Committee reveal tensions between national concerns and the inconsistent

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<sup>112</sup> Ibid.

<sup>113</sup> Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>114</sup> WIL, *Nineteenth Yearly Report, March 1934–January 1935* (London: WIL, 1935), p. 16. WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>115</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1935), p. 1.

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Catherine Marshall, *Notes on the Relation of National Sections to the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom* (c.1933), p. 2. WILPF, I:B, Reel 10.

<sup>118</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1935), p. 2.

interpretations of internationalism within the association. Nevertheless, the ‘bond of unity’ prevailed and WILPF remained intact.

### **Limits to WILPF’s internationalism**

It is apparent that, through its funding and the make-up of its Executive Committee, a network of core members and national sections from Western Europe and the United States dominated WILPF. Yet, to an extent, the association united women from different nationalities with different political views. Indeed, the association remained united, notwithstanding the tenacious debates about the role of the international Executive Committee outlined above, which cost WIL its President. Yet, like most other international women’s organisations, WILPF’s organisational culture and structure was rooted in the ‘Western’ context.<sup>119</sup> Notably absent from WILPF was a Russian section. Laurie Cohen argues that tensions between internationalism and the ‘unrelenting pull of nationalism’ contributed to WILPF’s inability to set up a section in Russia.<sup>120</sup> Little work has explored the communication between WILPF and Russian activists. The Hague congress was not the only significant gathering of women in 1915. A socialist women’s congress met in Berne in March 1915. Led by socialist women – including German Marxists, Clara Zetkin and Rosa Luxemburg, and Russian communist, Alexandra Kollontai – the Berne congress attracted delegates from France, Great Britain, Italy, Poland and Switzerland. Both the Berne and Hague congresses opposed the Great War and discussed the specific hardships on women during wartime. Notably, there were no Russian women present at the Hague Congress and attempts to form a Russian national section of WILPF failed. In 1928, *Pax International* reported that ‘we have tried to see if it was not possible to form a peace group in Russia, but the response from the women there has always been: ‘we cannot yet

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<sup>119</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women’s Transnational Activism*, p. 54.

<sup>120</sup> Laurie R. Cohen, ‘Early Endeavors to Establish a (Soviet) Russian WILPF Section, 1915–1925. A Little Known Episode in Feminist Transnational Peace History’, *Deportate, Esuli, Profughe*, 18–19 (2012), p. 182.

work for peace and freedom in this country; such ideals are regarded as bourgeois''.<sup>121</sup> As this statement shows, ideological factors prevented WILPF from making inroads into Soviet Russia during the interwar period.

WILPF members did successfully make some connections with Russian feminists, however. For example, envoys from the Hague congress spent time in Petrograd and Aletta Jacobs corresponded with Anna Shabanova, founder of the Russian women's peace league. In 1922, Alexandra Kollontai and Sophia Smidovich attended WILPF's conference at The Hague.<sup>122</sup> In addition, WILPF sought to attract Russian representation at its sixth international congress in Prague in 1929. Addams suggested sending an invitation and securing visas for two representatives of the Russian trade unions, but it was agreed that 'none of the Delegates know if these women were real pacifists', illustrating the differences between feminist pacifism and socialist anti-militarism. Yet, WILPF members agreed 'on the importance of securing cooperation with Russian pacifists'. Nevertheless, invitations to Russia were not delivered in time, and Russian women were absent from the Prague congress.<sup>123</sup> As mentioned in Chapter One, British women tried to travel to Russia in 1917 but were refused passports. WIL lamented that 'the great representative democratic women's organizations are refused access to their Russian sisters'.<sup>124</sup> Pethick Lawrence and Bondfield sent a message to Russian women in 1917 appealing to them 'to help our internationalism', promising 'a warm and sympathetic reception' from WIL.<sup>125</sup>

Appeals to Russian women diminished in the late 1920s and 30s. However, WILPF's progressivism and alleged links to the Soviet Union saw it targeted by anti-

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<sup>121</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (December 1928), p. 1.

<sup>122</sup> Addams, Balch and Hamilton, *Women at The Hague*, p. 49; Cohen, 'Early Endeavours to Establish a (Soviet) Russian WILPF Section', p. 192.

<sup>123</sup> WILPF, Minutes of the Executive Committee Meeting, 25–29 April 1924 at Swarthmore and 8 May at Washington D.C., p. 1. WILPF, I:B, Reel 9.

<sup>124</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1917), p. 3

<sup>125</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (September 1917), p. 3.



communist groups. A Geneva based group known as ‘International Entente Against the Third International’ claimed that WILPF was sustained and financed by the Comintern. Duchêne’s attendance at the Anti-Imperialist League meetings in Brussels in 1927 and her visit to the Soviet Union fuelled these claims.<sup>126</sup> Similarly, Camille Drevet, WILPF’s International Secretary, was threatened with expulsion from Geneva in 1933 due to her contacts in Russia.<sup>127</sup> Drevet visited the Soviet Union in 1931 and penned a sympathetic report on the state provision for childcare. Yet, the Swiss press branded her a ‘revolutionary propagandist’ due to her interest in the Soviet Union.<sup>128</sup> In comparison, WILPF’s links with radical pacifism saw the American section targeted by the US War Department in a conservative backlash against progressivism during the 1920s.<sup>129</sup> The infamous ‘spider-web chart’ – published in Henry Ford’s *The Dearborn Independent* in 1924 – illustrated the unproven links between pacifist and feminist movements with international socialism.<sup>130</sup> The chart and further attacks on feminist pacifists in the press were damaging for the US branch. Her leadership of the so-called ‘red’ WILPF tarred Addams’ reputation as a social reformer.<sup>131</sup>

For some women, socialism and contacts with the Soviet Union deeply influenced both their feminism and pacifism. For example, Duchêne – whose anti-fascism was explored in Chapter Three – was inspired by her travel to Russia and worked to provide aid for Russian and Austrian children in association with the Communist International.

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<sup>126</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 32.

<sup>127</sup> E.M. Pye to J. Addams, H. Hull & E. G. Balch, 3 July 1933. WILPF, I:A, Reel 2.

<sup>128</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 117.

<sup>129</sup> Kristen Marie Delegard, *Battling Miss Bolshevik: The Origins of Female Conservatism in the United States* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), p. 49; Erica J. Ryan, *Red War on the Family, Sex, Gender and Americanism in the First Red Scare* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2015), p. 2; Joan Jensen, ‘All Pink Sisters: The War Department and the Feminist Movement in the 1920s’, in Lois Scharf and Joan Jensen eds., *Decades of Discontent: The Women’s Movement, 1920–1940* (Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983), p. 211.

<sup>130</sup> ‘The Socialist-Pacifist Movement in America Is an Absolutely Fundamental and Integral Part of International Socialism (Lusk Report Page 11)’, *The Dearborn Independent* (1924), p. 11. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part III: Series I, 1917–1949, Box 1.

<sup>131</sup> Shepler and Mattina, ‘Paying the Price for Pacifism’.

Although Duchêne did not join the French Communist Party, ‘her pacifism was tinged with her passion for Russia, as the country of peace and of the liberation of women’ and she identified as a ‘fellow traveller’ of the French Communist Party.<sup>132</sup> In 1934, *Pax* published an English translation of her article titled ‘is Capitalism compatible with lasting Peace?’. The article outlined Duchêne’s views that WILPF should work to prepare for ‘the social transformation’ from ‘political anarchy’ brought by the capitalist system to ‘permanent peace’.<sup>133</sup> Duchêne’s revolutionary rhetoric left British and Swedish WILPF members feeling uneasy, and she was not re-elected to the Executive Committee in 1937.<sup>134</sup> Elisabeth Waern-Bugge, a Swedish WILPF member, raised concerns that Duchêne was ‘pretending not to be a communist’.<sup>135</sup> Although WILPF expressed sympathy towards ‘the purpose of the workers who are rising up everywhere to make an end of their exploitation’, the organisation urged its sections to find ways to work ‘in constructive and vigorous ways without violence’.<sup>136</sup> WIL favoured a more gradual evolution to a new international economic and political system based on peace and justice.

Ultimately, ideological differences and contrasting world views between the ‘West’ and Soviet Russia undermined efforts to create a Russian section of WILPF, demonstrating that WILPF’s internationalism was limited.<sup>137</sup> In addition, events in Russia during the interwar period and the rise of Stalinist dictatorship did not fit with WILPF’s vision for peace and harmony. In 1937, the association argued that ‘Europe is torn as much by unhealthy nationalism as by sabre-rattling of white or red dictatorships, with the dull roar

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<sup>132</sup> Carle, ‘Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace’, p. 300.

<sup>133</sup> Gabrielle Duchêne, ‘Is Capitalism compatible with lasting Peace?’, *Pax International* (July-August 1934), p. 2.

<sup>134</sup> Carle, ‘Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace’, p. 313.

<sup>135</sup> C. Ragaz, G. Baer & E. G. Balch to E. Waern-Bugge, 30 October 1934. WILPF, I:A, Reel 2.

<sup>136</sup> WILPF, ‘Resolution A VIII, Relation of Pacifists to Revolutionary Movements’, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920), p. 21. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>137</sup> Lorraine Coons argues that the divisions between Gabrielle Duchêne and other members of WILPF’s International Executive over support for the Soviet Union and anti-fascism demonstrate the organisation’s ‘inability to speak with a united voice’: Coons, ‘Gabrielle Duchêne’, p. 121.

of armaments production as the accompanying tune'.<sup>138</sup> Those countries that did not fit WILPF's 'Western' mould of democracy remained peripheral to the organisation's vision of feminist internationalism.

### **Maintaining an international women's organisation**

WILPF, however, did reach out beyond its Western Europe-North American core, as the organisation developed links with women in non-Western countries. New national sections were formed and increasing numbers of women from across the globe were represented at international congresses. At the organisation's second international congress, women from twenty-three different countries attended the meetings. The majority of representatives were from Western Europe and North America, but some women travelled from Australia, Mexico and Uruguay.<sup>139</sup> In 1921, the organisation had fifteen national sections, primarily based in Europe but also in USA, Canada and Australia.<sup>140</sup> At the association's fourth international congress, German member and international Vice President, Lida Gustava Heymann claimed that 'the sun does not set on our League', emphasising its global scope.<sup>141</sup> By 1925, WILPF had added sections in Belgium, Czecho-slovakia, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Italy, Japan, New Zealand and Ukraine to its ranks.<sup>142</sup> At the 1937 international congress, WILPF had twenty-six national sections including active groups in Egypt, Japan,

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<sup>138</sup> Thora Daugaard, 'Towards a Real League of Nations', *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27 to 31, 1937* (Geneva: WILPF, 1937), p. 35. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>139</sup> WILPF, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920), pp. 21-25. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>140</sup> The Official Report of the Zurich Congress, published in 1921, reported on national sections in Australia, Austria, Bulgaria, Canada, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States. WILPF, *Report of the International Congress of Women* (1919), p. 2. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>141</sup> Lida Gustava Heymann quoted in Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 49.

<sup>142</sup> The organisation also was in touch with a number of corresponding societies in Argentina, China, Finland, Jugo-Slavia, Latvia, Mexico, Peru, Philippine Islands, Roumania, Russia, Spain, Syria, Turkey and Uruguay. WILPF, Circular Letter, June 1925. WILPF, I:B, Reel 9.

Poland, Tunis and Yugoslavia.<sup>143</sup> 149 delegates attended this congress in Luhacovice, plus eighteen visitors from other countries where national sections did not exist, including representatives from India and Spain.<sup>144</sup>

Travel was crucial for the maintenance of international women's organisations, including WILPF. Travel helped to build transnational cooperation, friendships and networks.<sup>145</sup> Women's travel also contributed to their challenge to traditional gender roles, as travel was usually a male prerogative, as well as physically transcending borders for the transnational aims of WILPF.<sup>146</sup> Associations also maintained links between women through correspondence and the publication of regular newsheets and journals.

### *Communication*

Transnational women's networks provided 'welcome opportunities for that personal intercourse'.<sup>147</sup> The development of personal friendships forged at congresses helped to sustain the international women's movement. Rupp argues that 'to make a devoted friend from another nation represented one small victory for internationalism'.<sup>148</sup> Correspondence between WILPF members demonstrates the friendships that developed between members from different countries. For example, Ethel Williams – Chair of the WIL branch in Newcastle upon Tyne – wrote a letter to 'Little Bear', an unnamed WILPF companion in the US. The letter indicates a close personal relationship, using terms of endearment and

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<sup>143</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27 to 31, 1937* (Geneva: WILPF, 1937), pp. 188–200. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>144</sup> Shareefah Hamid Ali addressed the congress on the issue of Indian self-determination and Dr Margarita Camps presented a report to the congress on the situation in Spain. WILPF, *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27 to 31, 1937* (Geneva: WILPF, 1937), pp. 188–200. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>145</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 135.

<sup>146</sup> Desley Deacon, Penny Russell and Angela Wollacott, *Transnational Lives: Biographies of Global Modernity, 1700–Present* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 8.

<sup>147</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>148</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 195.

nicknames, and the letter indicates that the friends had sent gifts to one another.<sup>149</sup> Indeed, WILPF recognised the value of personal relationships that transcended national borders for the goals of internationalism. A report of the 1937 international congress described how ‘these friendships made between members in different countries’ as ‘one of the most fruitful results of any international gathering’.<sup>150</sup> Similarly, Bosch and Kloosterman demonstrate that ‘friendships reinforced their sense of sisterhood’, helping to create informal networks that were crucial to the building of an international women’s movement.<sup>151</sup>

Correspondence and the publication of a regular journal was one of the most important methods of maintaining an international organisation in between congresses. Bruna Bianchi has demonstrated that *Jus Suffragii* – the IWSA’s journal – was the most important women’s journal in keeping the internationalism of the movement alive during the war.<sup>152</sup> Similarly, Sybil Oldfield credits Mary Sheepshanks, editor of *Jus* from 1913 to 1919, with ‘disseminating women’s news’ from both belligerent and neutral states throughout the Great War.<sup>153</sup> In her role as WILPF’s International Secretary (1927–1929), Sheepshanks edited *Pax International*. It is worth recalling the various incarnations of WILPF’s international monthly journal, which started life as *Internationaal*, before the editors changed its name to *Pax et Libertas*, then to *Bulletin of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom* before settling on *Pax International* in 1925.<sup>154</sup>

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<sup>149</sup> Ethel Williams letter, c. 1924. WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>150</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (October 1937), p. 1.

<sup>151</sup> Bosch and Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship*, pp. 21–27.

<sup>152</sup> Bruna Bianchi, ‘Towards a New Internationalism: Pacifist Journals Edited by Women, 1914–1919’ in Hammerle, Uberegger and Bader Zaar eds., *Gender and the First World War*, p. 182.

<sup>153</sup> Oldfield, ‘Mary Sheepshanks Edits an Internationalist Suffrage Monthly in Wartime’, p. 119.

<sup>154</sup> WILPF, ‘International Headquarters Report’, *Report of the Fifth International Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington D.C.: WILPF, 1927). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

The journal published regular features on current affairs, the work of the League of Nations, news from WILPF headquarters, and crucially, reports from its national sections – although some sections appear in the pages of *Pax* more frequently, including the sections in Great Britain, the United States and the Scandinavian countries. The journal also published investigative articles from WILPF members about international relations and peace. For example, Swanwick wrote articles for *Pax* such as ‘Conciliation and Arbitration’ and Louie Bennett of the Irish section wrote about disarmament.<sup>155</sup> One of the most important functions of WILPF’s periodical was to publish the agenda, minutes and resolutions from its international congresses, which enabled members who could not travel to stay in touch with the work of the organisation. WIL also produced its own periodicals; it published *Towards Permanent Peace* to report on the events of the 1915 congress and a similar publication in 1919 titled *Towards Peace and Freedom*. These publications included congress reports, opinion pieces and articles written by congress delegates to communicate the congress proceedings to WIL members and like-minded individuals in Britain. WIL also produced a *Monthly News Sheet* from 1916 onwards, which included updates from international and national headquarters, articles on peace, women’s rights, disarmament and the League of Nations.

Language was a pertinent issue for international organisations. International women’s organisations mooted the idea of an international language, with some IAWSEC members suggesting Latin.<sup>156</sup> In 1919, WIL suggested the use of Esperanto at international congresses and discussed the possibility of providing lessons in Esperanto at WILPF’s Summer Schools.<sup>157</sup> However, English, French and German remained the association’s official languages, limiting those members who could not communicate in these languages.

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<sup>155</sup> Helena Swanwick, ‘Conciliation and Arbitration’, *Pax International* (August 1926), p. 3; Louie Bennett, ‘Why we must Disarm’, *Pax International* (April 1928), p. 3.

<sup>156</sup> Bosch and Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship*, p. 14.

<sup>157</sup> K. E. Royds to E.G. Balch, 21 November 1919. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

In addition, lengthy translations stalled discussions at congresses. However, from 1934 onwards *Pax* was published less frequently and mainly in English with only a few articles in French or German. The journal made frequent appeals for donations and subscriptions to fund its publication.<sup>158</sup> The various editors of *Pax* obviously struggled to keep the journal financially afloat, which also explains its decrease in its size and scope.

Subscription to WILPF's journal was more accessible than international travel for the majority of its members. An annual subscription to *Pax International* cost two shillings – the equivalent of fifty cents or 2.50 Swiss Francs. Copies of WIL's *Monthly News Sheet* originally cost one halfpenny, increasing in June 1917 to one penny and to two pence in July 1922. The journal celebrated its reduced price in January 1930 as a 'new year present to our readers!', encouraging existing readers to help secure new subscribers at this reduced rate.<sup>159</sup> Travel and communication were crucial in maintaining an international organisation such as WILPF. *Pax* and the *Monthly News Sheet* enabled WIL members to maintain a network, share news, ideas and proposals, whilst informing members about the work for peace more generally and in particular the work of the League of Nations.

However, participation in an international organisation required members to have sufficient personal funds to pay for international travel and leisure time to be able to attend congresses and meetings. In addition, many leading members of WIL were able to converse in multiple languages, which facilitated international gatherings and correspondence between feminists across borders. For example, Helena Swanwick was born in Germany before her family moved to England. She was also educated in France, thus her background enabled her to speak confidently in French and German. Her formative experiences attracted her to the work of the international women's movement;

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<sup>158</sup> Madeleine Z. Doty, 'The Future of Pax International', *Pax International* (December 1927), p. 2.

<sup>159</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1930), p. 1.

she claimed that ‘it has been impossible for me, therefore, to be anything but an internationalist’.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, Courtney was educated in French and German at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford, which facilitated her engagement with international feminist networks.<sup>161</sup> Macmillan studied in both Edinburgh and Berlin and could speak German to some degree.<sup>162</sup> Thus, it is evident that the women at the core of WIL’s leadership were overwhelmingly middle class and well educated. Sandell argues that whilst ‘international sisterhood’ was built on a common identity of womanhood, it was also constructed through a shared background in terms of class and education.<sup>163</sup> Likewise, Barbara Ramusack and Antoinette Burton argue that class mediated the interactions between Indian and British women, facilitating their co-operation and the building of feminist networks.<sup>164</sup>

Nevertheless, not all women at the core of WIL’s leadership were overtly middle-class; Matt Perry describes Ellen Wilkinson as an atypical WILPF member who came from a working-class background. Yet, she was a prominent international networker attending many international congresses, including WILPF’s international meetings in 1919 and 1929.<sup>165</sup> Wilkinson’s transnational mind-set facilitated her involvement in a range of overlapping networks during the interwar years, including trade unions, the peace movement, women’s movement and the labour movement.<sup>166</sup> In comparison, Margaret Bondfield – who had risen through the British trade union movement to become one of the

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<sup>160</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 20.

<sup>161</sup> Crawford, *The Women’s Suffrage Movement*, p. 113.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 363.

<sup>163</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women’s Transnational Activism*, p. 23; Goodman, ‘International Citizenship and the International Federation of University Women’, p. 709.

<sup>164</sup> Barbara N. Ramusack and Antoinette Burton, ‘Feminism, Imperialism and Race: A Dialogue between India and Britain’, *Women’s History Review*, 3:4 (1994), p. 475.

<sup>165</sup> Matt Perry, ‘In Search of “Red Ellen” Wilkinson Beyond Frontiers and Beyond the Nation State’, *International Review of Social History*, 58: 2 (2013), p. 223.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 220.



first female Labour MPs – bridged the gap between various international networks, including WIL and the International Federation of Working Women.<sup>167</sup>

### *International congresses*

International congresses were the focus of the WILPF network, as ‘its members are widely scattered during the intervening years’.<sup>168</sup> Congresses provided a meeting place for members and congress discussions formed WILPF’s policy and agenda. The location of the congress aimed to inspire and support the existing national women’s movement in that country. For instance, Luhacovice in Czechoslovakia was the venue for the ninth international congress in 1937 ‘to support the members in strengthening the democratic liberties’ in that country.<sup>169</sup> Discussions at international congresses often stressed the shared interests between women across borders, yet the association also stressed national differences to demonstrate the association’s internationalism. For example, the 1913 IWSA Congress held in Budapest was considered a high point in women’s internationalism, as it brought together representatives of approximately forty national suffrage campaigns. One of the most notable aspects of the 1913 congress was its emphasis on nationality through language, culture and religion, demonstrated at a pageant of women wearing national dress and a roll call of national flags.<sup>170</sup>

Mineke Bosch has explained how the women’s movement romanticized national differences to create a spectacle, both to entertain and highlight international politics.<sup>171</sup>

The ICW also used this technique, organising an ‘International Women’s Festival, The

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<sup>167</sup> Vapnek, ‘The 1919 International Congress of Working Women’, p. 163.

<sup>168</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Fifth International Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. vii. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>169</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27 to 31, 1937* (Geneva: WILPF, 1937), p. 9. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>170</sup> Bosch and Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship*, p. 18; Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 109.

<sup>171</sup> Bosch, ‘Between Entertainment and Nationalist Politics’, p. 5.

Pageant of Progress' in London May 1929. The pageant presented national dances from Poland, Italy, Hungary, Greece, Sweden, Czechoslovakia and England.<sup>172</sup> Although not as prominent at WILPF congresses, the Czech national section entertained the delegates of the sixth international congress with national folk songs.<sup>173</sup> Similarly, at the ninth international congress of WILPF a popular Icelandic singer – Engel Lund – performed a range of 'old folk songs from different centuries and countries' to reveal 'the source of many cultures, their common features and their individual peculiarities'.<sup>174</sup> International women's organisations highlighted unity and equality between women of different nations despite their different backgrounds. The use of light entertainment, folklore, national dress and songs emphasised these differences to demonstrate the reach of the international organisation.

WILPF congresses were held in different locations, rather than at the organisation's headquarters in Geneva, in an attempt to facilitate attendance from different countries. The sixth international congress held in Prague in 1929 was considered to be a success in terms of attracting a large audience, 'probably owing to the more central and accessible position of Czecho-Slovakia as compared with Ireland which enabled good delegations from East European countries'.<sup>175</sup> From its inaugural conference at The Hague in 1915 until 1935, eight congresses took place in Zurich (1919 and 1934), Vienna (1921), Washington D.C. (1924), Dublin (1926), Prague (1929), and Grenoble (1932). No congress took place outside of Europe or North America during this period, suggesting that the organisation

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<sup>172</sup> ICW, International Women's Festival, The Pageant of Progress Programme, 6–7 May, 1929. TWL@LSE, SICW/C/02/03.

<sup>173</sup> WILPF, 'Programme', *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>174</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27 to 31, 1937* (Geneva: WILPF, 1937), p. 9. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>175</sup> Ireland was the location of WILPF's previous congress in 1926. WILPF, *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

remained focused on the 'West'. As a result, it remained difficult for many delegates to attend congresses, due to the expense and distance of travel. Although Czechoslovakia was a central location for European delegates in 1929, only one Australian delegate managed to travel to Europe and no members from New Zealand were present, despite the active branches in these countries.<sup>176</sup> The women's peace movement in Australia was particularly strong. The Women's Peace Army, which operated in New South Wales and Queensland, and the Melbourne-based Sisterhood of International Peace, formed the Australian WILPF.<sup>177</sup>

In 1928, WILPF held an interim conference in Hawaii to coincide with the Pan-Pacific Women's Congress, which incorporated women from the USA, Australia, New Zealand and the Far East.<sup>178</sup> In holding a conference outside of Europe and North America, WILPF recognised the participation of its most far-flung members and facilitated their involvement.<sup>179</sup> In Honolulu, Addams highlighted the value of international meetings, which created a space for women to share ideas and 'think together'.<sup>180</sup> Sandell has highlighted the trend for regional organisation within the international women's movement during the late 1920s, which challenged the hegemony of Western-focused international organisations. Regional associations included the British Commonwealth League, All-India Women's Conference and the Pan-Pacific Women's Association.<sup>181</sup> Rather than subsume the efforts of international organisations – like WILPF – regional organisations contributed to the diversification of the women's movement and helped to strengthen

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid.

<sup>177</sup> WILPF, 'Australian National Section, Report', *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 405. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2; Damousi & Lake, *Gender and War*, p. 14.

<sup>178</sup> Angela Wollacott, 'Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian Women's Internationalist Activism in the 1920s–30s' in Mrinalini Sinha, Donna Guy and Angela Wollacott eds., *Feminisms and Internationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p. 86.

<sup>179</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (October 1928), p. 2.

<sup>180</sup> Jane Addams, 'Address to the Pan-Pacific Women's Conference', *Pax International* (October 1928), p. 3.

<sup>181</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's International Activism*, p. 171.

transnational relationships between women. Their formation also illustrates the complex relationship between the national and international within the transnational women's movement and the prevalence of national, regional and local identities and interests within transnational networks.<sup>182</sup> International women's organisations could not and did not seek to transcend national and regional differences.

### *Travel*

The experience of attending international congresses, the opportunity to meet WILPF peers from other countries and learn about different national, social and political contexts crucially contributed to the agenda and policy of international women's organisations. Bonnie Anderson argues that 'travel often fostered a woman's feminism'.<sup>183</sup> For instance, the 1921 congress in Vienna provided WILPF members with a first-hand account of the horrors of the aftermath of the Great War, in particular the effects of the naval blockade upon Central and Eastern Europe. The European famine became one of the organisation's key concerns during the early 1920s. Ethel Williams reported on the famine and malnutrition found in Vienna, especially amongst children. She condemned the 'blockade as a method of warfare' and urged national governments to 'remember that such warfare is directed against children, and that on them must fall the brunt of the blows'.<sup>184</sup> Williams' medical career had led to her work with women and children in Newcastle upon Tyne, where she became the city's first female doctor in 1896.<sup>185</sup> Her feminism was closely linked to her concern for health and welfare, which extended internationally following her

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<sup>182</sup> Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>183</sup> Bonnie Anderson, *Joyous Greetings: The First International Women's Movement, 1830–1860* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 19.

<sup>184</sup> Ethel Williams, 'A Visit to Vienna', *Towards Peace and Freedom*, (London: WIL, 1919), p. 10. WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>185</sup> David Neville, *To Make Their Mark: The Women's Suffrage Movement in the North East of England, 1900–1914* (Newcastle upon Tyne: North East Labour History Society, 1997), p. 15.

trip to Vienna.<sup>186</sup> International travel had multiple purposes: to bring WILPF members together as part of a transnational feminist network, and to assist WILPF's work in understanding issues beyond their own national frontiers.

Similarly, a mission to Ireland in 1920 by members of WIL influenced the agenda and policy of the British section. Organised by the Manchester branch in correspondence with the Irishwomen's International League, ten WIL members travelled to Ireland to investigate the alleged atrocities committed by the Black and Tans.<sup>187</sup> As mentioned previously, the members of WIL's Irish mission 'felt a special international responsibility to inform itself of how the nations within the British Empire are being treated by our Government'.<sup>188</sup> The delegation concluded that the British government was ruling against the will of seventy percent of the Irish population through force.<sup>189</sup> WIL's trip to Ireland influenced its policy on the action of the British government and brought the association into close contact with the Irish women's movement. Swanwick wrote that her time in Ireland brought 'one into contact with fresh friends'.<sup>190</sup> Following the mission, WIL initiated an Irish campaign, organising over a hundred meetings nationwide to report on the findings of the deputation.<sup>191</sup>

Fact-finding missions and trips to set up new national sections and develop connections with women where WILPF sections did not yet exist were key features of association's international work. At the Prague congress, WILPF commended its own

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<sup>186</sup> Nigel Todd, 'Ethel Williams: Medical and Suffrage Pioneer', *North East Labour History Society Bulletin*, 30 (1996), p. 19.

<sup>187</sup> The delegation included representatives of the Manchester branch of WIL, including Agatha Watts (Manchester Hon. Sec.), Annot Robinson, Catherine Chisholm, Amy Hereford, Amelia Gee, Ellen Wilkinson and Frances Melland, and members of Glasgow WIL, M. Mewhort and Agnes Dollan; plus WIL's national Chair, Helena Swanwick. WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1920), p. 1.

<sup>188</sup> WIL, 'A "Sort of War" in Ireland: Report of Mission to Ireland by the Women's International League' (October 1920), p. 1. WILPF, III, Reel 77.

<sup>189</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>190</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 340.

<sup>191</sup> WIL, 'Report of the British Section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, 1919 – 1921', *Report of the International Congress of Women in Zurich* (1919). WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

success in missions to China and Indochina, and visits to the Balkans and the Baltic states during 1927 and 1928. These ‘missions’ exported the principles of WILPF to countries beyond the ‘West’, extending the ‘international spirit that we wish to see prevail in the world’.<sup>192</sup> Attempts were made to form national sections of WILPF through the networks and friendships made by WILPF ‘missionaries’. Nevertheless, the use of the term ‘mission’ has imperial and religious connotations, implying a sense of duty and inherent value and suggests ‘Western’ superiority. International women’s organisations often tried to export their ‘Western’ vision of feminism to other nations.<sup>193</sup>

China became a key area of concern for WIL in the late 1920s. The rise of nationalism, the presence of British and US forces in the country, and the civil war featured heavily in *Pax International*’s regular column – ‘Danger Spots to Watch’ – from 1927.<sup>194</sup> WIL responded to the crises issuing a resolution to urge governments to withdraw armed forces and use conciliatory methods to resolve the points of difference over China, upholding that China ‘has the right to be treated as a sovereign State’.<sup>195</sup> Nevertheless, WIL went a step further and decided to send its own delegation to meet with the women in China claiming ‘why not get the women of the East to collaborate with the women of the West in establishing peace on earth?’.<sup>196</sup> WIL extended the ‘hand of friendship’ towards women of ‘Feminist Organisations in China’.<sup>197</sup> Edith Pye and Camille Drevet were WILPF’s representatives to China. From May 1927, *Pax* reported monthly on their trip until their return to Europe in June 1928. Reflecting on her journey, Drevet articulated a sense of missionary zeal, feeling assured that she was transporting the values of WILPF to

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<sup>192</sup> Camille Drevet, ‘Report on the Mission to Eastern Europe and to the Balkans’, *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 22. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>193</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 2.

<sup>194</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (March 1927), p. 1.

<sup>195</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (April 1927), p. 3.

<sup>196</sup> Ibid.

<sup>197</sup> WILPF, *Pax International* (May 1927), p. 4.

the Far East concluding that ‘the Chinese women need us and count us’.<sup>198</sup> Moreover, Pye and Drevet’s trip extended the scope of international feminism to other nations, attempting to extend WILPF’s network. Pye claimed ‘the Chinese women realized the desire of their Western sisters to do all in their power to work with them for the peace of the world’.<sup>199</sup> However, ‘sisterhood’ was not always based on equal status between European and ‘non-Western’ women.

In comparison, Addams’ earlier trip to Japan in 1923 was greeted by the Women’s League of Western Japan as an inspiration ‘to cooperate with the sisters of the world to make it a better place for our children’.<sup>200</sup> Yet, in a letter to WIL, the Women’s League of Western Japan called upon the British section to extend ‘friendship’ to help the Japanese women set up their own section of WILPF.<sup>201</sup> This letter suggests a hierarchy of democratic experience and knowledge of social movements. Western versions of feminism and democracy were portrayed as superior to the Japanese lack of experience.<sup>202</sup> Sandell employs the useful terminology of ‘big sister’ and ‘little sister’ to describe this complex relationship between women of the ‘West’ and the ‘East’, which has also been described as ‘feminist orientalism’ and ‘imperial suffragism’.<sup>203</sup> This attitude is also demonstrated clearly in Addams’ speech to the Dublin Congress in 1926. On the one hand, Addams credited China and India’s methods of conciliation and movements for passive resistance. Yet, she also argued that ‘if we are not careful, the Western civilization will pass away

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<sup>198</sup> Camille Drevet, ‘Reflections on my Journey’, *Pax International* (July 1928), p. 4.

<sup>199</sup> Edith Pye, ‘Report on the Delegation to China’, *Report of the Sixth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 23. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>200</sup> J. Wada to WIL, 17 July 1923. BLPES, WILPF/4/27.

<sup>201</sup> J. Wada to WIL, 23 July 1923. BLPES, WILPF/4/27.

<sup>202</sup> Anne Summers, ‘Gaps in the Record: Hidden Internationalisms’, *History Workshop Journal*, 52 (2001), p. 219.

<sup>203</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women’s Transnational Activism*, p. 11. Antoinette Burton has written extensively on the relationship between feminism and the British Empire, Burton, ‘The Feminist Quest for Identity’; Burton, *Burdens of History*.

from us to the new countries in the East who are working out this new technique'.<sup>204</sup>

Interestingly, she conveyed the activity for peace in the 'non-West' as a direct threat to the superiority of Western democracy, values and methods.

### **Feminism, internationalism and empire**

For British feminists, the Empire was a prominent feature of their national history and politics, influencing popular thought about the individual, nation and wider world. The Empire also facilitated networks between women of the 'West' and the 'East'. Antoinette Burton asserts that historians of feminism need to confront the link between feminism, racism and imperialist attitudes.<sup>205</sup> Along with Christine Bolt, Angela Woollacott, Clare Midgley and Phillipa Levine, Burton has analysed the relationship between empire and feminism in the international women's movement.<sup>206</sup> Woollacott argues that first-wave feminist internationalism was tied to Euro-American imperialism, which emphasised the superiority of Western values and methods of organisation.<sup>207</sup> In comparison, the Dutch section was influenced by its nation's role as a colonial power, claiming 'a certain responsibility for them [Dutch colonies] at present'.<sup>208</sup> Indeed, Bosch has revealed how Dutch imperialist attitudes influenced Aletta Jacobs' feminism, which is illustrated through her ideas about the duty of imperial powers to bring peace, justice and prosperity.<sup>209</sup> In contrast, German members welcomed the forced decolonisation of Germany under the

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<sup>204</sup> Jane Addams, 'Address', *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington: WILPF, US Section, 1927), p. 65. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>205</sup> Burton, 'The Feminist Quest for Identity', p. 46.

<sup>206</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*; Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned?*; Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Midgley, *Feminism and Empire*; Levine, *Gender and Empire*.

<sup>207</sup> Woollacott, *Gender and Empire*, p. 117.

<sup>208</sup> WILPF, 'Report of the Netherlands Section', *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington: WILPF, US Section, 1927), p. 44. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>209</sup> Bosch, 'Colonial Dimensions of Women's Suffrage', p. 27.



Treaty of Versailles, which they argued ‘has been an enormous and moral advantage’, allowing German delegates to preach the values of decolonisation to the congress.<sup>210</sup>

Nevertheless, national and imperial contexts could also encourage international feminism as European feminists engaged with their colonial ‘sisters’ in solidarity. Imperial connections created a ready-made network. For example, the British Commonwealth League connected women’s organisations in the British Empire.<sup>211</sup> Nevertheless, imperialist attitudes both hindered and propelled feminist internationalism.<sup>212</sup> Indeed, June Hannam has described an ambivalent relationship between suffragists and nationalist, anti-colonialists.<sup>213</sup> A study of WIL during interwar years shows how the issues relating to imperialism influenced the construction of an international feminist network.

### ***WIL’s anti-colonialism***

In 1926, the French section reported that ‘the relations between the imperialist powers and their colonies and protectorates are becoming more and more full of menace to the peace of the world’.<sup>214</sup> The statement of WILPF’s commission on colonial and economic imperialism held imperialist ambitions to account for the Balkan Wars of 1911 and the outbreak of the Great War in 1914, arguing that growing tensions between movements for national independence and the colonial powers will result in future war.<sup>215</sup> WILPF resolved to study the questions of colonialism and to promote the rights of small nations, promoting

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<sup>210</sup> WILPF, ‘Report of the German Section’, *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington: WILPF, 1927), p. 29. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>211</sup> Bush, ‘Feminising Empire’, p. 499.

<sup>212</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 172.

<sup>213</sup> June Hannam, ‘International Dimensions of Women’s Suffrage: ‘at the Crossroads of Several Interlocking Identities’’, *Women’s History Review*, 14:3&4 (2005), p. 549.

<sup>214</sup> WILPF, ‘Report of the French Section’, *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington: WILPF, 1927), p. 26. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>215</sup> Andrée Jouve, ‘Commission on Colonial and Economic Imperialism’, *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington: WILPF, 1927), p. 80. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

an ‘international organization taking into account the interests of all’.<sup>216</sup> In 1932, WILPF reaffirmed its mission to secure the ‘establishment of social, political and economic justice for all, without distinction of sex, race, class or creed’.<sup>217</sup> WIL was a progressive commentator on the issue of colonialism and promoted the right to national self-determination for all.

From the 1920s, WILPF became increasingly concerned with the question of nationality, the rights of minorities and the right to national self-determination. At its third international congress in 1921, Catherine Marshall stated that ‘we [WILPF] must say precisely what self-determination means and we must find out above all, what a nation is and what the League of Nations and the world understand by a nation’.<sup>218</sup> Nevertheless, the ability to transcend nationalism and promote internationalism was often limited to those whose national identity was not in question. The struggle for national self-determination was often a priority for women in colonial nations and national independence was considered a pre-requisite for a commitment to internationalism.<sup>219</sup> As mentioned previously, India became a key concern for the British section, due to its imperial connections. WIL urged the British government to grant India dominion status.<sup>220</sup> Yet, Burton argues that as British women sought to overcome their outsider status in British politics they projected the image of Indian women as the imperial ‘other’. Burton has revealed that British middle class feminists often operated ‘in opposition to oppressive ideologies and in support of them – sometimes simultaneously’.<sup>221</sup> In the case of Indian self-determination, feminist pacifists were particularly impressed with the movements’

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<sup>216</sup> Ibid., p. 81.

<sup>217</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Seventh Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Grenoble, May 15 to 19, 1932* (Geneva: WILPF, 1932), p. 52. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>218</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10 to 17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 126. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>219</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 121.

<sup>220</sup> WIL, *Thirteenth Yearly Report, February 1928–February 1929* (London: WIL, 1929), p. 27. WILPF, III, Reel 69; Bolt, *Sisterhood Questioned?*, p. 62

<sup>221</sup> Burton, *Burdens of History*, p. 211.

non-violent passive resistance techniques, which were seen as the principles of pacifism put into practice.<sup>222</sup>

WIL worked closely with the Indian women's movement, describing Indian feminists as 'sisters who are working for the same ideal'.<sup>223</sup> Shareefah Hamid Ali – President of the All India Women's Conference – was welcomed to WILPF's 1937 international congress. Ali delivered a speech to WILPF delegates on the situation in India. WIL's pamphlet titled *Mother India's Daughters* focused on the All-India Women's Conference demonstrating 'the breadth of outlook and the progressive nature of the reforms for which the women are working', which mirrored the goals of the British women's movement.<sup>224</sup> The All-India Women's Conference also expressed 'our condemnation of war as a crime against humanity' and aimed to work with all 'who are striving honestly for world disarmament'. It is evident that the Indian women's movement shared aims with WIL, which facilitated their co-operation.<sup>225</sup> WIL highlighted the role that the British women's movement could play in securing the franchise for Indian women, stating 'it is more important that we should see that it [the Indian women's movement] is strengthened in the way suggested, if we truly care for the welfare of India's millions'.<sup>226</sup> Thus, WIL's support for Indian self-determination and Indian women's suffrage was based on shared interests with the Indian women's movement. Yet, its support also implies a sense of imperial responsibility towards the British colony, confirming the 'big sister' – 'little sister' relationship between British and Indian feminists.

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<sup>222</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10 to 17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 95. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>223</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27 to 31, 1937* (Geneva: WILPF, 1937), p. 92. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>224</sup> WIL, *Mother India's Daughters, The Significance of the Women's Movement* (London: WIL, c.1934), p. 4. WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 8.

### *WIL's support for the Mandate System*

As noted earlier, the association was initially supportive of the League of Nations Permanent Mandates Commission, which oversaw the relationship between Mandated territories and the Mandatory powers. The scheme was a compromise, designed during the post-war negotiations, to create a system of international trusteeship and avoid 'single-nation imperial rule'.<sup>227</sup> However, WIL became increasingly critical of the system, which, it argued, failed to ensure the right to national self-determination for all. Recognising that the coordination of the Mandates was imperfect, WILPF demanded colonial powers recognise their responsibilities towards their colonies and encouraged education toward gradual independence.<sup>228</sup> As mentioned in Chapter Two, international women's organisations successfully lobbied for a woman to sit on the PMC. It is worth recalling that Swedish suffragist, Anna Bugge-Wicksell and Norwegian WILPF co-founder, Valentine Dannevig served as consecutive representatives to the PMC during the interwar years.<sup>229</sup> Susan Pedersen argues that the presence of a woman on the Mandates Commission 'helped to legitimate a particular understanding of European imperialism between the wars. Imperial rule, women's presence implied, would henceforth be based on tutelage and not force'.<sup>230</sup>

Nonetheless, WILPF supported the perceived hierarchy between colonial nations based on levels of development, which mirrored the Allied Supreme Council's categorisation of former German colonies into three categories – A, B and C – according to whether the colony could yet stand by itself in the modern world.<sup>231</sup> WILPF believed that

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<sup>227</sup> Gorman, 'Liberal Internationalism, the League of Nations Union, and the Mandates System', p. 457.

<sup>228</sup> WIL, *Mandates and the Governments of Backwards People* (1927). WILPF, Reel III, Reel 69; WILPF, *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington: WILPF, 1927), p. 85. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>229</sup> Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 349.

<sup>230</sup> Pedersen, 'Metaphors of the Schoolroom', p. 192.

<sup>231</sup> Pedersen, *The Guardians*, p. 29.

independent nations with a colonial history – like the USA and Australia – should be represented independently at the League of Nations. The association argued that in countries where the native civilization was highly developed and the tyrannical administration of the colonies had led to movements for independence – like the situation in British India – colonisers should ‘give up their sovereignty of their own accord’.<sup>232</sup> WILPF also identified a third category, which included ‘countries where the native races are plainly in a state of inferior civilization’ where ‘the Europeans have imposed a kind of order superior to the savage anarchy’ – in particular African colonies.<sup>233</sup>

The association did believe that Mandatory control of some colonies was necessary, asserting that the influence of Western democracies would be beneficial to the development of civilised nation-states. Yet, as Jeanne Morefield argues, liberal imperialist vision evolved during the interwar period away from ‘an explicit sense of cultural or racial superiority’. Imperialists believed that the values of freedom and equality were ‘both universally true and distinctly British’.<sup>234</sup> Thus, WIL’s views on empire, colonies and Mandates must be placed in their appropriate political context. WIL sought to balance liberal internationalism with the politics of empire.

WIL became increasingly concerned with the Mandates System during the 1920s, particularly the attitude of the British government as a Mandatory Power. In 1926, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Austen Chamberlain challenged the procedure of the Mandates Commission to allow local petitioners from the Mandated territories to be heard. The *Manchester Guardian* published Chamberlain’s note to the Secretary General of the League of Nations. The paper reported that Chamberlain’s attitude was ‘based on a

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<sup>232</sup> Andrée Jouve, ‘Commission on Colonial and Economic Imperialism’, Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926 (Washington: WILPF, 1927), p.82. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>233</sup> Ibid.

<sup>234</sup> Jeanne Morefield, *Empires Without Imperialism: Anglo-American Decline and the Politics of Deflection* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. 11.

dangerous principle’ and ‘misconception of the duties and responsibilities of the Commission’.<sup>235</sup> In response, WIL held a meeting of people interested in the issue of Mandates and sent a letter to the *Times* on 4 December 1926. Signatures included WIL leading members, Swanwick and Royden alongside significant politicians such as Charles Roden Buxton and Philip Noel Baker.<sup>236</sup> WIL indicated that there was ‘considerable anxiety (is) being felt at the growing tendency of the Mandatory Powers to regard mandated areas rather as portions of their own territories than as trusts to be administered by them on behalf of the League of Nations’.<sup>237</sup> The approach of the Mandatory Powers, particularly the governments of the British Empire, towards the aims of the League system troubled WIL. The association declared its support for the aims of the Mandates Commission.

### ***WIL’s attitude to the British Empire***

WIL’s attitude to British colonies and Mandates varied in relation to the perceived hierarchy outlined above. WIL’s 1929–1930 annual report demonstrates a commitment amongst feminist pacifists to the independent status of India and Egypt, yet continued trusteeship in Africa. Western principles are demonstrated through WIL’s attitude to local marriage customs in East Africa, which did not match modern Western practice and the association called upon the British government for the ‘suppression or alteration of these particular native customs, and in order to encourage native development along sound lines’, implying the superiority of Western rituals.<sup>238</sup> Yet, concurrently, WIL encouraged respect for the rights of the local population. For instance, on the issue of trusteeship in East Africa, WIL urged the use of reserves for the indigenous population, and the spending of Kenyan

<sup>235</sup> ‘Power of Mandates Commission: British Challenge “A Misconception of Duties” Natives Right of Petition’, *Manchester Guardian*, 20 November 1926, p. 14; Pedersen, *The Guardians*, p. 84.

<sup>236</sup> ‘Mandates and the League’, *The Times*, 4 December 1926, p. 8.

<sup>237</sup> WIL, ‘The W.I.L. and the Mandates Question’, *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1927), p. 3.

<sup>238</sup> WIL, *Fourteenth Yearly Report*, March 1929–March 1930 (London: WIL, 1930), p. 44. WILPF, III, Reel 69.

taxation on local services such as education, particularly for girls, medical care and agricultural development.<sup>239</sup>

The association had a broad understanding of social justice and progress but at times used paternalistic rhetoric. Ultimately, the association urged imperial powers to adopt ‘economic internationalism, free trade, and absolute prohibition of native forced labour or military service for European masters’.<sup>240</sup> Members condemned colonialism – especially economic colonialism – which threatened interdependence and peace between nations. WILPF argued that colonialism led to increased competition and rivalries – as seen in the ‘scramble for Africa’ – which would lead to future wars.<sup>241</sup> Thus, although influenced by imperial notions of Western superiority, WILPF remained committed to the ‘establishment of social, political and economic justice for all, without distinction of sex, race, class or creed’.<sup>242</sup>

Despite WIL’s progressive views on the values of national self-determination, in 1924 it had a bureau at the British Empire Exhibition where the association advertised its work.<sup>243</sup> WIL’s support of the Empire Exhibition seems to support imperialist ideas about British superiority and the value of the British Empire. WIL also held a conference at Wembley to discuss the ‘the responsibility of the women of the British Empire to work for world peace’ in 1924.<sup>244</sup> Emily Baughan has noted that internationalist organisations – like the Save the Children Fund – used a discourse of imperial responsibility, conveying the

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid, p. 43.

<sup>240</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Fifth Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington: WILPF, 1927), p. 91. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid, p. 85.

<sup>242</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Seventh Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Grenoble, May 15 to 19, 1932* (Geneva: WILPF, 1932), p. 52. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>243</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: WIL, 1924), p. 10. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, p. 11.

British Empire as ‘defenders of humanity’ despite their radical internationalism.<sup>245</sup> New international voluntary associations, such as the Save the Children Fund, the LNU and the British Red Cross, conveyed imperialism and internationalism as complementary.<sup>246</sup> Moreover, imperial legacies facilitated transnational activism, providing an existing network of contacts.<sup>247</sup> As Rob Skinner and Alan Lester suggest the relationship between imperial and international networks was integral to transnational organisations.<sup>248</sup> In comparison, the imperial connection between WIL members and the Indian women’s movement allowed British activists ‘the opportunity of expressing solidarity of women by claiming equal political rights for their sisters within the Empire’.<sup>249</sup>

### *The Irishwomen’s International League*

As outlined above, internationalism was intertwined with the issues of nationalism and imperialism. This is particularly prevalent in the work of the Irishwomen’s International League (IIL), which was based in Dublin from 1916 until the early 1930s. Indeed, IIL – the Irish section of WILPF – declared that the Irish were ‘victims of violence arising from the effects of Imperialism upon a dominant and subject nation’.<sup>250</sup> While, Jo Vellacott has demonstrated the transnational activism of anti-war suffragists, Margaret Ward notes that Vellacott’s account fails to incorporate the influence of imperialism and nationalism on women’s internationalism and pacifism.<sup>251</sup> Irish women had a complex relationship with international feminism and pacifism. The Irish suffrage movement was inextricably linked

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<sup>245</sup> Baughan, “‘Every Citizen of Empire Implored to Save the Children!’” Empire, Internationalism and the Save the Children Fund in Inter-War Britain’, p. 130.

<sup>246</sup> McCarthy, ‘Parties, Voluntary Associations and Democratic Politics’, p. 905. Rebecca Gill argues that ‘the reach of the British Empire gave rise to and facilitated these transnational connections’ in Gill, ‘Networks of Concern’, p. 828.

<sup>247</sup> Grant, Levine and Trentmann, *Beyond Sovereignty*, p. 3.

<sup>248</sup> Rob Skinner and Alan Lester, ‘Humanitarianism and Empire: New Research Agendas’, *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 40:5 (2012), p. 731.

<sup>249</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1919), p. 2.

<sup>250</sup> WILPF, ‘National Sections Reports’, *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10–17 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 231. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>251</sup> Margaret Ward, ‘Nationalism, Pacifism, Internationalism: Louie Bennett, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, and the Problems of “Defining Feminism”’ in Anthony Bradley and Maryann Gialanella Valiulis eds., *Gender and Sexuality in Modern Ireland* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts, 1997), p. 65.



to the issue of nationalism. Louise Ryan argues that the Irish campaign differed in this respect from the suffrage campaigns in most other Western countries and had more in common with women engaged in anti-colonial struggles for national self-determination, especially Indian women.<sup>252</sup> Comparative literature on the Irish and Indian women's movements has demonstrated the link between the struggle for national independence and the growth of the campaign for women's suffrage.<sup>253</sup> Nationalism politicised many women in Ireland whilst highlighting their inferior status within nationalist movements, which often sustained traditional gender roles by emphasising women's link to purity, tradition and national identity.<sup>254</sup>

Nonetheless, Ryan also notes that Irish suffragists had an interest in international issues and the role of women in making peace. In addition, international contacts and suffrage networks, particularly in Britain and the USA, influenced the Irish women's movement.<sup>255</sup> The Irish Women's Franchise League – the militant wing of the movement for votes – sent its greetings to the 1915 Hague congress, yet no Irish women were present at the formative meetings of WILPF. Reluctant to permit Irish nationalists to travel to Europe the British government only allowed one Irish woman – Louie Bennett, a non-militant suffragist and co-founder of the Irishwoman's Suffrage Federation – a permit to travel with the rest of the British delegation to The Hague. As has already been noted, however, restrictions on shipping routes prevented the British group from travelling to the

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<sup>252</sup> Louise Ryan, 'Traditions and Double Moral Standards: The Irish Suffragists' Critique of Nationalism', *Women's History Review*, 4:4 (1995), p. 498.

<sup>253</sup> Woollacott, *Gender and Empire*, p. 106 & p. 113; Catherine Candy, 'Relating Feminisms, Nationalisms and Imperialisms: Ireland, India and Margaret Cousins's Sexual Politics', *Women's History Review*, 3:4 (1994), 581–94.

<sup>254</sup> Tara M. McCarthy, 'Woman Suffrage and Irish Nationalism: Ethnic Appeals and Alliances in America', *Women's History Review*, 23:2 (2014), p. 189; Ryan, 'Traditions and Double Moral Standards: The Irish Suffragists' Critique of Nationalism', p. 488.

<sup>255</sup> McCarthy, 'Woman Suffrage and Irish Nationalism', p. 189; Earner-Byrne, 'Aphrodite Rising from the Waves', p. 96.

continent due to.<sup>256</sup> Bennett did attend WILPF's second congress in Zurich, along with Lillian Willis and Miss Rablett, who were both involved with the Irish co-operative movement.<sup>257</sup>

In 1915, Bennett wrote to Chrystal Macmillan urging British women to support 'Irishwomen's claim for independent representation', claiming that 'the Women's International Committee for Permanent Peace shall not refuse independent representation to any people, state or nation feeling itself a distinct entity and enjoying, or aspiring to enjoy self-government'.<sup>258</sup> Irishwomen wanted their own section of WILPF, rather than become members of WIL. Bennett outlined that 'a branch of an English organisation is rarely, if ever, successful in Ireland'.<sup>259</sup> WILPF made a radical decision to allow the formation of sections not defined by existing boundaries of the nation-state.<sup>260</sup> Proponents of the right to national self-determination, WILPF was, overall, supportive of Irish nationalism. The resolutions produced at The Hague in 1915 outline the association's view 'that no territory should be transferred without the consent of the men and women in it and that the right of conquest should not be recognized. That autonomy and a democratic parliament should not be refused to any people'.<sup>261</sup> The IIL was a national section of WILPF from 1916, first chaired by veteran suffragist, Charlotte Despard, who turned her attention towards Ireland during the interwar years.<sup>262</sup> In this respect, WILPF differed from other international women's organisations as it permitted women to form national sections

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<sup>256</sup> See Chapter One.

<sup>257</sup> Irish Delegation to Zurich Congress (1919). WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>258</sup> L. Bennett to C. Macmillan, 26 November 1915. WILPF, III, Reel 77.

<sup>259</sup> L. Bennett to C. Macmillan, 5 January 1916. WILPF, I:B, Reel 9.

<sup>260</sup> Zimmermann, 'The Challenge of Multinational Empire', p. 108.

<sup>261</sup> WPP, Report of the International Congress of Women (USA: Roy G. Harper, 1915), p. 12. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>262</sup> Louise Ryan, 'A Question of Loyalty: War, Nation, and Feminism in Early Twentieth-Century Ireland', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 20:1 (1997), p. 24; WILPF, 'Greetings to the Congress', *Bericht-Rapport-Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

in countries that had not yet acquired independent statehood.<sup>263</sup> The Dublin-based IIL had a small membership, counting approximately thirty members in 1926, from suffragist, nationalist and republican backgrounds.<sup>264</sup> For example, prominent members included Irish suffragists, Lucy Kingston, Rosamond Jacob and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington.

Nonetheless, the extent to which national concerns should dominate the agenda of the IIL caused tensions within the section. Leading figures, Louie Bennett and Hanna Sheehy Skeffington represented contrasting viewpoints on the issues surrounding Irish republicanism, the Anglo-Irish Treaty and the use of force in the nationalist struggle. Bennett believed that Ireland's national question was distinct from other political issues, including women's suffrage, peace and internationalism. Bennett's pacifism was a critique of militant nationalism.<sup>265</sup> She advocated the use of passive resistance techniques to ensure freedom and protect the sanctity of life, including tactics such as the boycott English goods, hunger strikes and tax resistance. Moreover, she urged the use of political methods in the nationalist struggle, explaining how the establishment of law courts and local governments along with Sinn Féin's dominance of municipal councils had reduced the 'British Government to an absurdity, in spite of their military power of repression'.<sup>266</sup> In contrast, Sheehy Skeffington's campaign for women's rights and national self-determination were combined in her republican-feminist outlook.<sup>267</sup> Sheehy Skeffington was by no means an absolute pacifist, claiming that 'there may still be time when armed aggression ought to be met with armed defence'.<sup>268</sup> Indeed, Hanna and her husband, Francis Sheehy Skeffington – killed by British troops in 1916 – had supported the use of arms by the Irish Citizen Army

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<sup>263</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 53.

<sup>264</sup> WILPF, 'Proceedings', *Report of the Fifth International Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 1. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 27.

<sup>266</sup> Louie Bennett, Notes on Passive Resistance (c. 1920). WILPF, III, Reel 77.

<sup>267</sup> Ward, 'Nationalism, Pacifism, Internationalism', p. 80.

<sup>268</sup> Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington quoted in Ward, 'Nationalism, Pacifism, Internationalism', p. 68.

during the 1913 Lockout and during the 1916 Rising, believing that the working class had no choice but to take up arms against the might of the state.<sup>269</sup> Disagreements about the use of force and republicanism plagued the IIL and Bennett resigned as Secretary in 1922 in protest against the influence of republican women within the association.<sup>270</sup> Bennett remained involved with the section and the international body, WILPF, throughout the interwar years.

The context of Irish politics influenced the IIL's concern with the rights of smaller nations, stating that 'we who belong to the Irish Section of that League [WILPF] feel ourselves to have a special duty in regard to the subject of Nationality'.<sup>271</sup> Indeed, the women's movement linked the issue of nationality and citizenship,<sup>272</sup> demonstrated clearly in the aims of the IIL. The Irish section became increasingly concerned with the position of minorities and suggested the creation of an international commission to ensure conciliation and co-operation between different groups.<sup>273</sup> Bennett addressed the 1919 congress calling on the association to 'give your support to Ireland in her legitimate struggle for the right of self-determination'.<sup>274</sup> IIL was enthused that other WILPF members were interested in Ireland's right to national self-determination, reporting that 'our Irish problem has elicited a fine proof of internationalism from the National Sections of the Women's International'.<sup>275</sup> Following her visit to Ireland, as part of the WIL deputation in 1920, Agatha Watts urged for recognition of events in Ireland as 'a great International problem'

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<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Ward, 'Nationalism, Pacifism, Internationalism', p. 76.

<sup>271</sup> Irishwomen's International League to the 'Smaller Nations', June 1919. WILPF, III, Reel 77.

<sup>272</sup> DuBois, 'Internationalizing Married Women's Nationality', p. 205.

<sup>273</sup> WILPF, 'Irishwomen's International League, Report', *Report of the Fifth International Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 37. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>274</sup> L. Bennett, 'Appeal on behalf of Ireland', International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, assembled in Conference at Zurich, May 1919. WILPF, III, Reel 77.

<sup>275</sup> WILPF, 'Irishwomen's International League, Report', *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10 to 17, 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 232. SCPC, WILPF Collection (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

as well as stressing the responsibility of English women to ‘work for the practical application of the spiritual forces of justice, truth and goodwill’.<sup>276</sup> Similarly, Pethick Lawrence called on ‘newly enfranchised women’ to use their influence to ‘save Ireland from the untold suffering that must come from the continuation of the present policy’.<sup>277</sup> Furthermore, Addams reported to the American Commission on Ireland and the German section addressed a letter to David Lloyd George outlining the effects of the Irish situation on other nations.<sup>278</sup>

The IIL hosted the fifth international congress of WILPF in Dublin. As noted earlier, the 1926 congress was one of the first international gatherings held in the Irish Free State. William Cosgrave, head of the Irish government, and Éamon de Valera, the prominent republican, attended the opening of the congress.<sup>279</sup> The issues of imperialism, self-determination, nationality and the rights of minorities dominated this congress due to its significant location.<sup>280</sup> Sheehy Skeffington stated that ‘it is most appropriate that the Congress has met right in Ireland, because Ireland is the country that knows most what foreign violence and militarism mean’.<sup>281</sup> The Irish section drew close links between peace and freedom; Sheehy Skeffington quoted Patrick Pearse in her address to the congress arguing that ‘Ireland unfree can never be at peace’.<sup>282</sup>

The political context in Ireland deeply influenced the IIL, which is reflected in its principal concerns for self-determination and the rights of minorities. Although exceptional

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<sup>276</sup> Agatha Watts, ‘An English Woman in Ireland’, *Monthly News Sheet* (April 1921), p. 3.

<sup>277</sup> Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, ‘Wanted: A New Policy for Ireland’, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1921), p. 2.

<sup>278</sup> WILPF, ‘National Sections Reports’, *Report of the Third International Congress of Women, Vienna, July 10–17 1921* (Geneva: WILPF, 1921), p. 228. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>279</sup> WILPF, ‘Proceedings’, *Report of the Fifth International Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 1. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, ‘Vote of Thanks’, *Report of the Fifth International Congress of the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 72. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

<sup>282</sup> Ibid.

members of WILPF – most prominently Rosika Schwimmer – denounced feelings of national loyalty, a focus on the IIL reveals the extent to which nationalism and imperialism influenced the feminism, pacifism and internationalism of WILPF members. Nevertheless, the power of nationalism caused an irrevocable divide within the Irish section, which disintegrated in 1931 over whether the IIL should support republicanism.<sup>283</sup> The complexities inherent in balancing national and international ideals demonstrated in the work of the Irish and Indian women's movements challenges the dichotomy often created between nationalism and internationalism. Overall, nationalism both challenged and reinforced WILPF's internationalism throughout the interwar years.

### Conclusion

WILPF was as an international women's organisation, it created a transnational structure through an arrangement of national sections and an International Executive Committee based in Geneva. Nonetheless, this chapter has demonstrated that national interests, loyalties and identities were not subsumed by a commitment to feminist internationalism. For most WILPF activists, nationalism and internationalism were compatible and 'should never have been set against the other'.<sup>284</sup> Internationalism, however, was a vague concept that included a belief, a method for organising and a popular movement.<sup>285</sup> WILPF's internationalism was broad and included its belief that peace and equality were transnational issues, as well as its faith in international institutions, such as the League of Nations, and a sense of international sisterhood that transcended national borders.

Analysing the structure of WILPF's national sections and the tensions that arose between the British national section and the international Executive Committee reveals the

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<sup>283</sup> Owens, *A Social History of Women in Ireland*, p. 153; Hunt, 'The Immense Meaning of it All', p. 24.

<sup>284</sup> Jane Addams, 'Presidential Address', *Bericht-Rapport-Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>285</sup> Laqua, *The Age of Internationalism*, p. 5.

intricacies of internationalism. The British section believed that internationalism should represent national differences and similarities, whereas French members of the Executive Committee argued that members could rise above national differences and promote true transnationalism. Similarly, a limited understanding of internationalism that relied on shared interests and a sense of common womanhood, at times, restricted the reach of WILPF.

Practically, a core network of activists sustained WIL's internationalism. Yet, international congresses, travel, correspondence and the distribution of regular publications also played a crucial role in developing and maintaining links across national borders. Despite the inherent difficulties in organising an international women's organisation, WILPF did manage to sustain an international organisation throughout the period. Emily Greene Balch, WILPF's second international President, stressed the value of WILPF's unity in a letter to the delegates of the association's 1937 international congress, in which she described the 'real and dear tie which binds us together all of us co-workers, known and unknown, and which makes us one body whatever our national or other differences'.<sup>286</sup> This chapter has demonstrated the influence of the international organisation and networks on the British WIL.

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<sup>286</sup> Emily Greene Balch, 'Address', *Report of the Ninth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Luhacovice, Czechoslovakia, July 27 to 31, 1937* (Geneva: WILPF, 1937). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.

## Chapter Five

### WIL at the Centre of an Activist Nexus

The 1915 International Congress of Women drew women together from a range of activist backgrounds; many had been involved in suffrage movements, others had long been advocates of peace or active in social reform associations.<sup>1</sup> Although WIL was formed around two main aims – peace and women’s enfranchisement – the group’s wider concern with social justice, freedom and internationalism featured heavily in the group’s minutes, resolutions and campaigns. Moreover, WIL ‘co-operated frequently with other organisations to further special work which lies within the scope of our aims and object’.<sup>2</sup> This chapter will consider WIL’s personal and institutional ties to a range of social movements and voluntary associations, including the women’s and peace movements; the labour movement; liberal internationalism and humanitarian relief organisations to place it at the centre of a national and international activist nexus, or a connected group of associations.

Literature on the international women’s movement has begun to consider the transnational connections and overlap between women’s associations during the early twentieth-century.<sup>3</sup> Using the imagery of a ‘textured cloth’ to describe the international women’s movement Rupp demonstrates that WILPF, ICW and IWSA were enmeshed in the wider movement, suggesting it that is difficult to entangle the history of one

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<sup>1</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, ‘Evening Speech’, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17, 1919* (Geneva, Switzerland: Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, 1920), p. 222. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>2</sup> WIL, *Fourteenth Yearly Report, March 1929–March 1930* (London: WIL, 1930). WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>3</sup> Rupp and Taylor, ‘Forging Feminist Identity’, p. 363; Sandell, *The Rise of Women’s Transnational Activism*.



organisation from the history of the entire movement.<sup>4</sup> Moreover, Julie Carlier shows how a transnational approach can reveal the ‘entangled history’ and multiple influences on the women’s movement, by considering both national and international activism.<sup>5</sup> Although Carlier focuses on Belgian feminism before the Great War, this chapter will use a similar approach to reveal the intricate connections and overlap between WIL and a range of voluntary associations and social movements.<sup>6</sup>

Activist networks were not unique to the twentieth century. The earlier women’s movement was connected to a broader field of activism. For example, campaigns for the abolition of slavery and temperance politicised a number of women, who became involved with campaigns for women’s suffrage as a result.<sup>7</sup> Similarly, political movements such as socialism in France and Chartism in Britain introduced a number of women to feminist concerns.<sup>8</sup> The nineteenth century peace movement also attracted a number of women activists. Heloise Brown has demonstrated that the Franco-Prussian War (1870–1871) and the Anglo-Boer War (1899–1902) were influential for the women’s movement. Feminists questioned the use of physical force and negotiated the discourses of nationalism, imperialism and patriotism.<sup>9</sup> Moreover, Brown argues that the origins of pacifist, internationalist and humanitarian impulses within the twentieth century feminist movement were present in the nineteenth century movement.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, Eliza Riedi identifies prominent activists in the pro-Boer campaign, including Charlotte Despard, Kate Courtney

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<sup>4</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 7; Likewise, Patricia Ward D’Itiri describes the ‘crazy quilt pattern of interactions’ between international women’s organisations and individual activists that created international networks, D’Itiri, *Cross-Currents in the International Women’s Movement*, p. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Carlier, ‘Forgotten Transnational Connections and National Contexts’, p. 503; Carlier, ‘Entangled Feminisms’.

<sup>6</sup> Francisca de Haan, Margaret Allen, June Purvis and Krassimira Daskalova, *Women’s Activism: Global Perspectives from the 1890s to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> Sinha, Guy and Woollacott eds., *Feminisms and Internationalism*, p. 3; Janet Zollinger Giele, *Two Paths to Women’s Equality, Temperance, Suffrage and the Origins of Modern Feminism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995).

<sup>8</sup> Anderson, *Joyous Greetings*, pp. 12–13.

<sup>9</sup> Brown, ‘*The Truest Form of Patriotism*’, pp. 7–13.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 183.

and Isabella Ford – influential in the formation of WIL in 1915, as has been noted earlier in this thesis.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the influence of a wide range of social movements contributed to the development of both national and international women's organisations and helped to create a diverse and intricate network of activists.

In comparison, recent work on the League of Nations has shed light on the 'vibrancy' of transnational networks in interwar international society.<sup>12</sup> Yet, as Pedersen argues, there is much still to be uncovered about the structures and networks at Geneva, which became a hub of transnational activism during the interwar period.<sup>13</sup> Internationalists favoured the creation of networks through interpersonal relations and transnational co-operation to further their goals.<sup>14</sup> WILPF, with its headquarters in Geneva, was a member of the international networks surrounding the League of Nations during the interwar years. The international sphere was particularly important for feminists to create an alternative to male-dominated national politics.<sup>15</sup> Internationalism shaped both WILPF's feminism and pacifism and the League provided a suitable focus for its campaigns.<sup>16</sup> As argued in Chapter Four, national networks remained important to internationalists.<sup>17</sup>

This chapter will examine the importance of networks for WIL's activism. Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikknik have argued that advocacy networks 'multiply the channels of access to the international system'.<sup>18</sup> As has been pointed out, WIL was a small voluntary association in terms of its membership numbers, thus Keck and Sikknik's

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<sup>11</sup> Riedi, 'The Women pro-Boers', pp. 92–115.

<sup>12</sup> Clavin, 'Conceptualising Internationalism', p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Pedersen, 'Back to the League of Nations', p. 1113.

<sup>14</sup> Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society*, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> Sluga, 'Female and National Self-Determination', p. 495.

<sup>16</sup> As explored in Chapters Two and Three of this Thesis.

<sup>17</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, p. 150.

<sup>18</sup> Kathryn Sikknik and Margaret E. Keck, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1998), p.1.

approach is a useful tool in this analysis of the British section.<sup>19</sup> The writer and WIL member, Winifred Holtby claimed that ‘groups of professional women, organisers, artists, writers, members of societies like the Equal Rights International, the Open Door Council, the National Women’s Party of America, the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom, are now in a minority and they know it’ during the 1930s.<sup>20</sup> Yet, WIL’s international counterpart – WILPF – suggested that ‘our strength lies not in the quantity but in the rare quality of our membership’.<sup>21</sup> Like its international partner, WIL worked through an intricate web of contacts to create a broader sphere of influence, which helped to increase its access to political channels both nationally and internationally. The concept of advocacy networks is a useful tool for scholars of social movements; it reveals the dynamics of activism beyond official organisational histories and demonstrates the continuity of movements. Charles Tilly’s useful definition of a social movement suggests that they are a ‘connected, evolving, historical set of political interactions and practices’.<sup>22</sup> Twentieth century international women’s organisations were, in many ways, a new development in the history of the women’s movement, as they directed their campaigns at the newly formed League of Nations and developed connections with the vibrant networks and international associations connected to interwar international society. Nonetheless, women’s international activism had a much longer trajectory, as has been demonstrated by scholars of the early international women’s movement. Thus, WILPF and WIL developed existing and new connections with social movements and activist associations.

Previous chapters in this thesis have illustrated a number of aims shared by WIL and the wider women’s, peace and internationalist movements of the early twentieth

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<sup>19</sup> By 1935, WIL had 6000 members across Britain: WIL, *Nineteenth Yearly Report, March 1934–January 1935* (London: WIL, 1935). WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>20</sup> Holtby, *Women and a Changing Civilisation*, p. 115.

<sup>21</sup> WILPF, *Our Members* (c. 1920). WILPF, I:A, Reel 1.

<sup>22</sup> Charles Tilly and Lesley J. Wood, *Social Movements, 1768–2008*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2009) pp. 6–13.

century. This chapter will uncover the numerous personal interactions, connections and alliances built between WIL and other voluntary associations during the interwar period – focusing on the women’s movement, peace movement, labour and socialist activism, liberal internationalism and humanitarian associations. The quantitative methods of social network analysis could offer much to the history of women’s movements. This chapter, however, relies on qualitative sources – including organisational minutes, WIL’s *Monthly News Sheet*, correspondence and biographical dictionaries – to allow this chapter to explore the flow of information, campaigns and personnel between WIL and a range of other voluntary associations, by focussing on personal and institutional links. This chapter will contribute to the literature on women’s political activism, by incorporating the multifarious campaigns and organisations that WIL members were involved. As Hannam and Hunt argue, rather than ‘compartmentalising women’s experiences in the parallel histories of particular parties, movements and organisations, women’s politics should be seen as something which happens in a range of spaces’.<sup>23</sup> Thus, this study of WIL’s connections at the transnational, national, and local levels reveals the dynamism of women’s activism in a variety of forums.<sup>24</sup> Firstly, this analysis will examine the members of WIL’s Executive Committee who straddled different networks to reveal formal and informal social interaction between WIL and other groups. Secondly, this chapter will explore on the collaborative efforts and campaigns organised by WIL and other associations. This chapter, therefore, will analyse WIL as a crucial thread in the ‘textured cloth’ of interwar activism.

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<sup>23</sup> Karen Hunt and June Hannam, ‘Towards an Archeology of Interwar Women’s Politics: The Local and the Everyday’, in Gottlieb and Toye eds., *The Aftermath of Suffrage*, p. 137.

<sup>24</sup> Karen Hunt, ‘The Local and the Everyday: Interwar Women’s Politics’, *The Local Historian*, 42:4 (2012), p. 269; Karen Hunt, ‘Rethinking Activism: Lessons from the History of Women’s Politics’, p. 221.

## **The Women's International League and the women's movement**

A diverse range of women's organisations operated at the national and international level throughout the interwar years.<sup>25</sup> Although they had different aims and purposes, many women's associations shared a common concern in raising the status of women and a number of women were active in multiple organisations, creating an overlap in personnel facilitating co-operative efforts. Although the League of Nations had no mandate to tackle women's issues, women's organisations used the international arena to lobby for women's rights, as illustrated in Chapter Two through the examples of the nationality of married women and traffic of women and children campaigns.<sup>26</sup> Although there were issues that divided women's associations – most prominently the debates over protective legislation – they continued to have much in common during the interwar years.

Women's organisations also differed over whether they identified themselves as 'feminist'. Yet, most groups promoted the broad concept of 'active citizenship' and co-operated for this goal, as has been demonstrated in Chapter Two.<sup>27</sup> WIL shared the goal of securing women's suffrage and promoting citizenship with existing suffrage organisations and newly formed women's organisations including the Open Door Council and the Six Point Group. For instance, the Women's Freedom League encouraged enfranchised women to use the vote 'to establish equality of rights and opportunities between the sexes'.<sup>28</sup> The National Council of Equal Citizenship – which had previously been called NUSEC – campaigned to secure more women in parliament and on local authorities, worked for an equal moral standard between men and women, aimed to improve the status of wives and mothers, lobbied for equal pay, supported equality at the League of Nations, and

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<sup>25</sup> Berkovitch, *From Motherhood to Citizenship*, p. 61.

<sup>26</sup> Eisenberg, 'The Status of Women', p. 10; Miller, "'Geneva—the Key to Equality'", p. 219; Metzger, 'Towards an International Human Rights Regime', p. 73.

<sup>27</sup> Beaumont, 'Citizens Not Feminists', p. 413.

<sup>28</sup> Women's Freedom League, *Constitution as revised at the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference* (1931). TWL@LSE, 2WFL/4/3.

encouraged active citizenship.<sup>29</sup> Likewise, one of WIL's principal aims was 'to secure full rights of citizenship to women' and its Executive Committee encouraged women to study political topics – especially international relations – and to question their parliamentary candidates in order to make an informed decision at the ballot box.<sup>30</sup>

Many women's associations also actively supported peace and disarmament throughout the interwar years. The National Council of Equal Citizenship reported on a 1932 demonstration in favour of world disarmament, claiming that it 'brought back memories of the demonstrations of the suffrage days'.<sup>31</sup> The Women's Co-operative Guild was particularly active in the campaign for peace declaring 'themselves absolutely against war on any pretext whatever'.<sup>32</sup> At the international level, both the ICW and IAWSEC supported peace and disarmament.<sup>33</sup> Rather than signalling a decline within the movement, the diversity of groups committed to raising the status of women and international issues such as peace and disarmament signals 'variety and vigour' within the movement.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Personal connections***

In her work on the suffrage movement, Sandra Stanley Holton acknowledges the political significance of personal friendship and shared values to the development of the British campaign for women's votes.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, Alison Ronan has identified the importance of friendships within the women's peace movement, which she describes as 'a refuge' for activists who shared 'a sense of shared comradeship'. Friendships, Ronan argues, were a

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<sup>29</sup> National Council for Equal Citizenship, *Annual Report* (1932), p. 4. TWL@LSE, 2NSE/C/14.

<sup>30</sup> WIL, *Fourteenth Yearly Report, March 1929–March 1930* (London: WIL, 1930). WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>31</sup> National Council for Equal Citizenship, *Annual Report* (1932), p. 15. TWL@LSE, 2NSE/C/14.

<sup>32</sup> Women's Co-operative Guild, *Fortieth Annual Report* (London: Co-operative Printing Society, 1923), p. 11. Hull University Archives, UDCW/2/10.

<sup>33</sup> ICW, *President's Memorandum Regarding the Seventh Quinquennial Meeting of the International Council of Women Held at Washington D.C. May 4 to 14 1925*. TWL@LSE, 5ICW/B/08.

<sup>34</sup> Bingham, "Era of Domesticity", p. 225.

<sup>35</sup> Sandra Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days: Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 3; Stanley Holton, "To Educate Women into Rebellion", p. 1112.

catalyst for political activism and provided support for women speaking out against war.<sup>36</sup> Chapter Two illustrated that WIL built on the legacy and experience of suffrage organising. Moreover, Chapter Four demonstrated how women's internationalism could be nurtured by personal friendships. Bosch and Kloosterman argue that personal contacts helped to build networks within the women's movement.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Bosch's analysis of Aletta Jacobs' travel writing reveals the connections she had with British feminists before 1915. For example, Jacobs' anti-colonialism, which developed during the Boer War, brought her into close connection with Emily Hobhouse – who, as previously identified, was a British critic of the government's action in South Africa.<sup>38</sup> Although she did not attend the 1915 Hague congress, Hobhouse supported its aims and wrote the foreword to the official report of the international congress.<sup>39</sup> Notably, Jacobs was also acquainted with Millicent Garrett Fawcett, whom she met on a trip to London in 1880. Nonetheless, their relationship cooled significantly, as they took different stances on the Boer War. Fawcett was a patriotic supporter of the British government.<sup>40</sup> This instance demonstrates the influence of personal interactions on the international women's movement alongside the power of shared interests and concerns, which formed the basis of a transnational association, like WILPF.

Lady Courtney of Penwith (Kate) was also a pro-Boer, internationalist, pacifist and suffragist. She worked with Hobhouse in the British Women's Committee for the South African Conciliation Movement.<sup>41</sup> On the outbreak of war in 1914, Courtney assisted 'innocent enemies' by founding a committee to relieve destitute German civilians and she

<sup>36</sup> Ronan, 'Fractured, Fragile, Creative', p. 25.

<sup>37</sup> Bosch and Kloosterman, *Politics and Friendship*, p. 21.

<sup>38</sup> Bosch, 'Colonial Dimensions of Women's Suffrage', p. 26.

<sup>39</sup> 'To the Women of Germany and Austria, An Open Letter', *Jus Suffragii* (January 1915); Emily Hobhouse, 'Foreword', *Bericht-Rapport-Report* (Amsterdam: ICWPP, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>40</sup> Aletta Jacobs, *Memories, My Life as an International Leader in Health, Suffrage, and Peace*, ed. by Harriet Feinberg (New York: The Feminist Press, 1996), p. 32; Gill, 'Networks of Concern', pp. 827–44.

<sup>41</sup> Oldfield, *Women Humanitarians*, pp. 52–4.

visited German prisoners of war on prison ships at Southend on Sea.<sup>42</sup> Courtney was also involved with the British Committee of the International Congress of Women and the foundation of WIL, becoming a member of the Executive Committee in 1915 and serving as the association's Honorary Treasurer from 1920 to 1927. Courtney was well connected to the political establishment through family connections. Her husband, Leonard Henry Courtney, was a Liberal politician and her sister, Beatrice Webb, a prominent social reformer. In 1915, Courtney used her connections to persuade the government to grant passports to twenty-five members of the British Committee of the International Women's Congress so that they could travel to The Hague. Moreover, Courtney's London home became a hub of social activity. She hosted international members of WILPF during their visits to Britain, including Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch.<sup>43</sup> Upon her death, WIL noted that 'her house in Cheyne Walk was frequently opened to the W.I.L. for meetings and receptions, and her wide circle of acquaintance among politicians made this peculiarly helpful'.<sup>44</sup>

In comparison, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence – WIL's Treasurer (1915–1919) and later Vice President – was a well-connected political activist engaged in a number of campaigns and associations. She had her first taste for public work with the West London Mission before becoming a leading figure in the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU).<sup>45</sup> She and her husband, Frederick Pethick Lawrence, also had strong connections with the Labour Party; they counted Keir Hardie as a respected friend, until his death in 1915. During the interwar years, Emmeline was a key figure in the women's movement. As well as her involvement in the foundation of WIL, she served as President of the

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<sup>42</sup> Courtney, *Extracts from a Diary*, p. 29.

<sup>43</sup> Courtney, *Extracts from a Diary During the War*, p. 42.

<sup>44</sup> WIL, *Thirteenth Yearly Report, February 1928–February 1929* (London: WIL, 1929), p. 15. WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>45</sup> Linda Martz, 'Mary Neal and Emmeline Pethick: From Mission to Activism', *Women's History Review*, 23:4 (2014), p. 620.



Women's Freedom League from 1926 to 1935 and sat on the Executive Committee of both the Open Door Council and the Six Point Group.<sup>46</sup>

Pethick Lawrence was a serial campaigner and perhaps atypical of WIL's grassroots members – but many middle class suffrage activists took leading roles in a range of different associations. These multiple connections influenced the organisation's agendas and they frequently reported on each other's campaigns. For example, along with other WIL members – including Lady Parmoor (née Marian Ellis), Ellen Wilkinson and Agatha Harrison – Pethick Lawrence was heavily involved with the Indian women's movement.<sup>47</sup> It is no coincidence that the issue of Indian national self-determination and women's suffrage featured prominently WIL's agenda, as Chapter Four has shown.<sup>48</sup> WIL took a progressive view on the Indian question, arguing that Indian women should have a say in their national government and the attendance of Indian women at the meetings of the association's India Committee was facilitated by individual WIL members' connections to the movement in India.<sup>49</sup>

Furthermore, social ties between activist women assisted the formation of WIL in 1915. On the outbreak of war, Pethick Lawrence accepted an invitation to speak in the USA to boost the American suffrage campaign. She travelled with Rosika Schwimmer, whom she had met at the International Women's Suffrage Alliance (IWSA) congress in Budapest in 1913. Schwimmer and Pethick Lawrence used their platform to urge American women to commit to the idea of a negotiated peace.<sup>50</sup> The pair contributed to the birth of

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<sup>46</sup> The Open Door Council was founded in 1926 to campaign for equal economic opportunities for women, and the Six Point Group was created in 1921 to campaign for legal, economic and social equality for women.

<sup>47</sup> Pethick Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World*, p. 337; Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 108.

<sup>48</sup> WIL, 'British Women and India', *Monthly News Sheet* (July 1930), p. 2.

<sup>49</sup> WIL, *Mother India's Daughters, The Significance of the Women's Movement* (London: WIL, 1934). WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>50</sup> Wernitznig, 'Out of her Time?', p. 4.

the Women's Peace Party, which became the US section of WILPF.<sup>51</sup> In April 1915, Pethick Lawrence travelled with American women to The Hague.<sup>52</sup> Travel became a prominent feature of Pethick Lawrence's transnational activism during the interwar period. Facilitated by her connections in WILPF and IWSA, Pethick Lawrence met with members of the women's movement across Europe sending reports back to WIL's *Monthly News Sheet*. Despite the obvious limitations of time, financial means and linguistic skills for grassroots members, international travel by leading WIL members helped to keep the national sections of WILPF connected.<sup>53</sup> For instance, Emmeline toured Germany for three weeks in 1924, where she worked with German WIL member Gertrude Baer and French member Marcelle Cappy.<sup>54</sup>

In comparison, Chrystal Macmillan also attended the Hague Congress in 1915 and helped to found WIL. As a suffragist and barrister, Macmillan used her connections with the suffrage movement and her legal expertise to lead the collaborative effort between women's associations in the campaign for the nationality of married women, as noted in Chapter Two. As well as being active in WIL, Macmillan served on the Executive Committee of NUSEC; she was an Executive Committee member of the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene; a member of the British Federation of University Women; and was Vice President of IWSA between 1913 and 1923.<sup>55</sup> Along with Pethick Lawrence, she was a founding member of the Open Door Council, which campaigned for legal equality for women and opposed protective legislation. Chrystal Macmillan's ties to a range of these associations place her at the centre of a web of women's activism. Macmillan used

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<sup>51</sup> Schott, *Reconstructing Women's Thoughts*, p. 39.

<sup>52</sup> Pethick Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World*, p. 312; Wiltsher, *Most Dangerous Women*, p. 49.

<sup>53</sup> Sandell, *The Rise of Women's Transnational Activism*, p. 135.

<sup>54</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1924), p. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement*, p. 363; Sybil Oldfield, 'Macmillan, (Jessie) Chrystal (1872–1937)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, 2004 [<http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/38526>], accessed 21 July 2016.

her connections to lead the women's international demonstration on the nationality of married women to the 1930 Codification Conference at The Hague.<sup>56</sup>

Personal connections between women activists were crucial for the development of national and transnational networks of women and WIL in particular, illustrated by the examples of Hobhouse, Lady Courtney, Pethick Lawrence and Macmillan. Prominent individuals were members of multiple women's organisations attended national and international congresses and corresponded with activists from other countries. Many of these activist connections were cultivated through women's experiences in pre-war suffrage and social reform movements. For instance, Mary Sheepshanks was encouraged to join the NUWSS by her friend Hilda Clark – granddaughter of John Bright, co-founder of the Anti-Corn Law League – both women went on to become prominent in WIL.<sup>57</sup> Personal interactions and exchanges facilitated co-operation between different women's associations through alliances and joint campaigns.

### ***Collaborative action: supranational women's alliances***

Joint alliances and campaigns developed around central issues as well as personal links. During the interwar years, women's transnational networks expanded and the League of Nations became a focus for their activity.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, as has been noted in Chapter Two, formalised networks were created to co-ordinate activity at the international level, which joined up a diverse range of women's associations. In 1931, the Liaison Committee of International Women's Organisations (LCIWO) superseded the Standing Joint Committee of Women's International Organisations, which had been active since 1925. The Liaison Committee was a supra-national alliance of associations, including WILPF, ICW,

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<sup>56</sup> Law, *Women: A Modern Political Dictionary*, p. 100.

<sup>57</sup> Mary Sheepshanks, *The Long Day Ended* (typescript, c.1952), p. 49. TWL@LSE, 7MSH, FL642.

<sup>58</sup> Davies, 'A "Great Experiment" of the League of Nations Era', p. 410.

IAWSEC, the World Young Women's Christian Association, the World Union of Women for International Concord, the International Federation of University Women and Equal Rights International. Other coalitions were also formed around single-issue campaigns, such as the League of Nations Women's Consultative Committee on Nationality and the Peace and Disarmament Committee of the Women's International Organizations. These associations formalised connections between women's organisations and attempted to co-ordinate the multifaceted campaigns of the international women's movement. The Liaison Committee and the Consultative Committee on Nationality also acted as advisory bodies to the League of Nations on women's issues.<sup>59</sup> Thus, Jaci Eisenberg argues that examining women's work at the League of Nations reintegrates their stories into history of the League.<sup>60</sup> The League created new opportunities for women activists. Women's relationship to the nation was complex and they were often prevented from attaining full citizenship, traditionally 'believed to possess transnational qualities'.<sup>61</sup> International women's organisations and supranational alliances asserted women's rights on the international stage whilst emphasising the transnational nature of their concerns, such as suffrage and trafficking, which affected women worldwide.

WILPF played a key role in international women's networks, using them to advocate that women should be heard in the new international politics of the Geneva era. WILPF's headquarters in Geneva hosted meetings of women's networks. The LCIWO and WILPF aimed to increase female representation at the League and lobbied for women to be appointed to positions within the League's administration. The Committee supported those few women appointed to positions within the League, such as Rachel Crowdy, head of the

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<sup>59</sup> Zimmermann, 'Liaison Committees of International Women's Organisations', p. 1; DuBois, 'Internationalizing Married Women's Nationality', p. 215.

<sup>60</sup> Eisenberg, 'The Status of Women', p. 10.

<sup>61</sup> Sluga and James eds., *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics*, p. 7; Mackay and Thane, 'The Englishwoman', p. 191.

Social Section; Dr Paulina Luisi, a Uruguayan feminist in the League's Social Section; and Avril de Sainte-Croix, who served on the Advisory Committee on Trafficking of Women and Children.<sup>62</sup> As a British delegate to the Fifth Assembly of the League of Nations, Swanwick constructed a vast personal network, which influenced her activism and affected the groups she was involved. Whilst serving as President of WIL, the Labour Government selected her as a substitute delegate to the League Assembly, recognising her expertise on international relations.<sup>63</sup> She had published widely on the subject, including pamphlets entitled 'New Wars for Old', 'Collective Insecurity' and 'The Roots of Peace'. As a key figure in the national and international women's movement, Swanwick used her connections to represent the women's movement at the League Assembly.<sup>64</sup>

### **The Women's International League and the peace movement**

Swanwick was an active suffragist before the outbreak of the Great War. In her autobiography, she claimed that the suffrage movement 'did not attract me; it bludgeoned my conscience'.<sup>65</sup> In 1914, she opposed the outbreak of war, writing that 'if I had felt driven to fling myself into the movement for the vote, I was even more ruthlessly compelled by pity and grief and patriotism to discover the truth, as I saw, about war in general and this war in particular'.<sup>66</sup> Swanwick's varied work that encompassed her main goals for suffrage, peace and internationalism, brought her into connection with a diverse range of activists and politicians. Her range of activism demonstrates the personal links between WIL and the wider British peace movement. As illustrated in Chapter Three, WIL was founded in response to the horror of the outbreak of the First World War and it

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<sup>62</sup> Gorman, *The Emergence of International Society*, p. 58.

<sup>63</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: WIL, 1924) p. 3. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>64</sup> Swanwick held a meeting at WIL Headquarters on 31 July 1924 for leading figures of the women's movement. Those in attendance included, Margaret Ashton, Manchester Councillor and WIL member, Nina Boyle, suffragist and child welfare campaigner, Oglive Gordon, Eva Hubback, Winifred Mayo, Lady Parmoor, Edith Picton Tubervill, Eleanor Rathbone, Evelyn Sharp and Mary Stocks. WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924*, (London: WIL, 1924), p. 3. WILPF, III, Reel 68

<sup>65</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 183.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 263.

cultivated connections with the peace movement. For instance, WIL was also affiliated to the National Peace Council, which had been formed in 1908 as an umbrella organisation of peace associations.<sup>67</sup>

In the January 1916 edition of *The U.D.C.* – the UDC’s monthly journal – Swanwick outlined WIL’s links with UDC policy. She articulated that WIL took ‘“war” to mean the domination of the weak by the strong’. For feminist pacifists, then, war was also manifest in the subjection of women by men, as well as the domination of small states by larger nations and the waged ‘slavery’ of workers – many of these ideas would have appealed to the predominantly left-leaning membership of the UDC.<sup>68</sup> WIL and UDC shared many interests and there was a significant overlap in personnel. For example, two weeks before the Hague Congress, the UDC sponsored a National Conference of Women ‘to discuss the basis of a permanent peace settlement’.<sup>69</sup>

Twenty-four out of the thirty-four members of the conference organising committee were also members of the British Committee of the International Women’s Congress – which, as mentioned in Chapter One was the precursor to WIL – including Manchester councillor Margaret Ashton; trade unionist Margaret Bondfield; suffragist and Hague delegate Kathleen Courtney; Anglican preacher and suffragist Maude Royden; and Quaker Sophia Sturge. The UDC conference argued that ‘the duty of women is not only to palliate the horrors of war, but to help form a public opinion which will make the repetition of such wars as this unlikely’.<sup>70</sup> Interestingly, this rhetoric echoed the language of the ‘Call to the Women of All Nations’ issued by Dutch suffragist Aletta Jacobs inviting women to The

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<sup>67</sup> National Peace Council, *Organisations Represented on the Council* (1919). WILPF, I:D, Reel 17.

<sup>68</sup> H. M. Swanwick, ‘The Women’s International League’, *The U.D.C.* (January 1916), p. 26. Hull University Archives, UDDC/5/28/3. Marvin Swartz argues that the UDC influenced the Labour Party’s foreign policy from 1917. Marvin Swartz, *The Union of Democratic Control in British Politics During the First World War* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p. 169.

<sup>69</sup> UDC, Agenda of National Conference of Women to discuss the basis of a permanent peace, 14 April 1915. TWL@LSE, 2LSW/E/13/28.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Hague in 1915.<sup>71</sup> The UDC appealed to women's associations, including the NUWSS, in an attempt to create a 'Women's Register of the U.D.C.' and reach 'influential and working women'.<sup>72</sup> However, the NUWSS' constitution and policy did not allow it to affiliate with organisations that stood for political objects other than suffrage.<sup>73</sup> WIL's broader goals and aims for women's rights and peace brought the association into collaboration with the UDC, whilst maintaining its own identity as a feminist pacifist organisation. Despite her prominence within the mixed-sex UDC, Swanwick asserted that women should organise separately to 'become fully aware of their own experience' and that men 'have attained a dominance in the world quite out of proportion to their place as those of only one half of the human race'.<sup>74</sup>

The Union's membership did decline after the end of the Great War, but its policies continued to resonate with the public mood in the aftermath of the war. Its six-point programme focused on democratic control of foreign policy, disarmament, free trade, the right to self-determination, democratisation of the League of Nations and a revision of the peace treaties.<sup>75</sup> Although WIL's aims were more comprehensive than the UDC's six-point plan, its goals for peace closely mirrored those of the UDC, in particular its goals for disarmament and the revision of the peace treaties. Swanwick claimed that 'our League holds all the principles of the U.D.C. as fundamental'.<sup>76</sup> The Union, however, was not a pacifist organisation. It was founded to oppose secret diplomacy – which its members held responsible for the outbreak of war in 1914 – and lobbied for a just peace. The Council also had close ties to the Labour and Liberal parties, as many of its leaders were also

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<sup>71</sup> Aletta Jacobs, 'International Congress of Women', *Jus Suffragii* (March 1915), p. 1.

<sup>72</sup> E. D. Morel to the NUWSS, 11 August 1915. TWL@LSE, 2LSW/E/13/28.

<sup>73</sup> Millicent Garrett Fawcett to the Secretaries of Societies, 24 August 1915. TWL @ LSE, 2LSW/E/01/5/02.

<sup>74</sup> H. M. Swanwick, 'The Women's International League', *The U.D.C.* (January 1916), p. 26. Hull University Archives, UDDC/5/28/3.

<sup>75</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p.258.

<sup>76</sup> H. M. Swanwick, *The New Government and Peace* (London: WIL, 1924), p. 1. SCPC, Helena Swanwick, CDG-B, Great Britain, Box 2

prominent in parliamentary politics.<sup>77</sup> Ceadel therefore describes the UDC as ‘pacifist’. It is worth recalling that pacifism describes the section of the British peace movement, which asserted that defensive military force might be required to protect and secure a world without war. Pacifists or absolute pacifists, on the other hand, repudiated all forms of war.<sup>78</sup> WIL however, was able to accommodate both pacifism and pacificism within its organisation until the mid-1930s, which helped it establish connections with a range of peace organisations.

### ***Personal connections***

WIL had a number of personal connections to the UDC. Swanwick was the only woman to serve on its Executive Committee and she edited the organisation’s journal – *Foreign Affairs* – between 1924 and 1928. She contributed regular articles on various issues relating to British foreign policy, the League of Nations and the prospects for peace.<sup>79</sup> Other WIL members also served on the UDC’s General Committee, including Leeds-born Quaker and feminist Isabella Ford; Women’s Labour League President and member of the Women’s Freedom League Ada Salter; and Newcastle-based suffragist Ethel Williams. Frederick Pethick Lawrence – Emmeline’s husband – was also a member of the UDC General Committee.<sup>80</sup> Notably, a number of the UDC’s male founding members had been proponents of women’s suffrage during the pre-war campaign, including Charles Trevelyn and Ramsay MacDonald.<sup>81</sup> There was considerable overlap between leading members of WIL and UDC. As well as those aforementioned, Dorothy Woodman left her post as WIL

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<sup>77</sup> Sally Harris, *Out of Control: British Foreign Policy and the Union of Democratic Control, 1914-1918* (Hull: University of Hull Press, 1996), p. 203.

<sup>78</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 7.

<sup>79</sup> For example, Helena M. Swanwick, ‘The Outlawry of War, Or What you Will’, *Foreign Affairs* (February 1928), p. 231. Hull University Archives, UDDC/5/46.

<sup>80</sup> UDC, The First Annual Meeting of the General Council of the Union of Democratic Control, Secretary’s Report, Supplement to The U.D.C. [No.1] (Nov. 1915). Hull University Archives, UDDC/5/28/1.

<sup>81</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, pp. 159–207.



Secretary in 1928 to work for the UDC. Although by the mid-1920s, the Council had effectively split over the issue of sanctions and its work diminished.<sup>82</sup>

Although there was significant crossover between WIL and UDC, Vellacott notes that the peace faction of the women's movement varied greatly. The diversity within WIL facilitated its collaboration with a range of peace organisations – not just the UDC – whilst retaining its own identity as a feminist pacifist association.<sup>83</sup> For instance, Swanwick promoted a change to political structures to ensure peace, whereas Catherine Marshall was more concerned with the process of war. Marshall's personal network of Independent Labour Party contacts, personal relations with Clifford Allen, and her suffrage contacts aided WIL's support for the No Conscription Fellowship.<sup>84</sup> Fenner Brockway, one of the co-founders of the Fellowship, described Marshall as a 'brilliant collaborator' who had 'learned all there was to know about political strategy' through her work in the NUWSS.<sup>85</sup> Her devotion to conscription or a 'man's cause', however, was not always well received by her feminist colleagues. Swanwick openly expressed her regret at the loss of Marshall's services as 'a serious deprivation' to WIL. Yet, WIL did support the NCF, as it also objected to conscription and called on Prime Minister Asquith to repeal the Military Services Act.<sup>86</sup>

Maude Royden was also an active member of both the women's and peace movements. Sue Morgan describes the life of Royden as a 'constellation of ideological connections' between feminism, the campaign for ordination and the abolition of war.<sup>87</sup> As well as joining WIL, she was Secretary of the Fellowship of Reconciliation (FOR). A

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<sup>82</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 266; WIL, *Thirteenth Yearly Report, February 1928–February 1929* (London: WIL, 1929). WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>83</sup> Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*, p. 123..

<sup>84</sup> Jo Vellacott, *From Liberal to Labour with Women's Suffrage: The Story of Catherine Marshall* (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1993).

<sup>85</sup> Brockway, *Inside the Left*, p. 68.

<sup>86</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1916), p. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Morgan, 'A "Feminist Conspiracy"', p. 777.

Christian pacifist organisation, FOR was founded in December 1914 and its membership rose steadily throughout the interwar period, although it was by no means a mass movement.<sup>88</sup> After a trip to India, where she met with Mahatma Gandhi, her interest in absolute pacifism was renewed. As mentioned in Chapter Three, she initiated the idea of a ‘Peace Army’ in response to the Japanese invasion of Manchuria in 1931. Royden called on the League of Nations to implement a peacekeeping force to enforce Article 16 of the Covenant, which made provision for a collective force against an aggressor.<sup>89</sup> Although the ‘Peace Army’ never got off the ground, the idea attracted much publicity in the national press.<sup>90</sup> In 1938, Royden joined the Peace Pledge Union, which had been formed two years earlier by Dick Sheppard. The Union called on its members to repudiate all war and supported Chamberlain’s policy of appeasement to avoid war. Nonetheless, in September 1939 Royden renounced her absolute pacifism and resigned from the PPU, believing that the threat posed by fascism in Germany ‘was worse than war’.<sup>91</sup> Swanwick, Marshall and Royden were amongst a number of WIL members who were also active in other peace organisations. Personal connections to the wider peace movement aided WIL’s involvement in mass action for peace in the 1920s.

### ***Collaborative action: No More War demonstrations***

The peace movement of the 1920s flourished in the optimism of the newly formed League of Nations. Moreover, a widespread ‘never again’ attitude also contributed to the popularity of pacifist novels and films, as noted in Chapter Three.<sup>92</sup> In 1921 the first of a

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<sup>88</sup> Crawford, *Women's Suffrage*, p. 610. The Fellowship’s membership rose from 3300 in the late 1920s to 9813 in 1939, see Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, Appendix I.

<sup>89</sup> Maude Royden, *The Peace Army, A Sermon* (1932). TWL@LSE, 7AMR.

<sup>90</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 287. Coverage in the national press included: ‘Miss Maude Royden and The “Peace Army”’, *The Times*, 2 March 1932, p. 14; ‘Peace Army Leaders in Action: Demonstration at the Docks’, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 June 1932, p. 22.

<sup>91</sup> Gottlieb, “‘The Women’s Movement Took the Wrong Turning’”, p. 454; Sheila Fletcher, *Maude Royden: A Life* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 274.

<sup>92</sup> Eglin, ‘Women Pacifists in Interwar Britain’, p. 149.

series of annual mass demonstrations were held in France and Germany to mark the anniversary of the outbreak of the Great War. These demonstrations attracted between 100,000 and 200,000 supporters in Berlin alone during the early 1920s.<sup>93</sup> The first British ‘No More War’ demonstration took place in 1922 and drew together a range of peace organisations, including WIL.<sup>94</sup> Four processions made their way through London, ending in Hyde Park, 29 July 1922. The demonstration coincided with the meetings of the International Peace Congress and was supported by the LNU, the Society of Friends, the Women’s Co-operative Guild, the FOR and ex-servicemen’s groups. WIL members volunteered as stewards, produced banners and assisted with the children’s contingent. WIL members also sat on ‘No More War’ organising committees in London, Manchester, Liverpool and Birmingham. The transnational nature of the demonstrations appealed to WIL’s internationalist goals. ‘No More War’ campaigns also occurred in the USA, Holland, Sweden, Spain, Austria, Hungary, Czecho-Slovakia, Switzerland and Ireland, alongside Britain, France and Germany.<sup>95</sup> WIL’s *News Sheet* celebrated the success of the first demonstration and it took a leading role in the preparations for the 1923 demonstrations; Swanwick and Marshall sat on the national committee and the association offered to organise an international section of the London procession.<sup>96</sup>

The final ‘No More War’ demonstration was held in 1924. Nevertheless, another peace initiative with a similar name – the No More War International Movement – continued to be active. This association had evolved out of the remnants of the No Conscription Fellowship, which had folded after the Great War. The NCF’s leaders became prominent in the No More War Movement, including Fenner Brockway who

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<sup>93</sup> Daniel Laqua, ‘Reconciliation and the Post-War Order: The Place of the *Deutsche Liga für Menschenrechte* in Interwar Pacifism’ in *Internationalism Reconfigured*, p. 211.

<sup>94</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 246; Ceadel, *Pacifism in Britain*, p. 62; WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (April 1922), p. 4.

<sup>95</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (June 1922), p. 3.

<sup>96</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (July 1922), p. 1; WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1923), p. 3.

became editor of the journal, *No More War*.<sup>97</sup> The Movement was predominantly a socialist-pacifist organisation, which became the British section of the War Resisters' International, founded at The Hague in 1922. Ceadel describes the No More War Movement as 'the pacifist offshoot of an increasingly left-wing ILP'.<sup>98</sup> Socialist anti-militarism also found expression in the British Anti-War Movement (BAWM), founded in 1932. The BAWM was a communist-front pacifist society, supported by a number of WIL members, including Dorothy Woodman and Ellen Wilkinson.<sup>99</sup> Similarly, other WIL supporters, including Royden and Sylvia Pankhurst had links to the British section of the Women's World Committee Against War and Fascism, which as mentioned in Chapter Three was a venture led by French WILPF member and fellow traveller of the French Communist Party, Gabrielle Duchêne.<sup>100</sup>

In 1933, WILPF's Executive Committee issued a definitive statement on fascism, calling on

large organizations, political, labour, peace, social, cultural, national and international, to workers and intellectuals, to all men and women of good will, organized and unorganized; we ask them to sink their differences and unite their efforts for a great struggle, against Fascism, for Peace and Freedom.<sup>101</sup>

As this declaration indicates, WILPF's opposition to fascism, which was closely linked to its opposition to militarism, facilitated co-operation with communists and fellow travellers. Nevertheless, WILPF's conservative members found its association with the World Women's Committee Against War and Fascism troublesome. In particular, WIL expressed its concerns over 'collaboration with those who are working to bring about social

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<sup>97</sup> Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 246.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 248.

<sup>99</sup> Ceadel, 'The First Communist "Peace Society"', p. 70.

<sup>100</sup> Carle, 'Women, Anti-Fascism and Peace', p. 291; Coons, 'Gabrielle Duchêne', p. 122.

<sup>101</sup> WILPF, Statement on Fascism issued at the Executive Committee of WILPF, 11–15 April 1933. WILPF, I:B, Reel 10; Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism', p. 215.

revolution by violence'.<sup>102</sup> As demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, a rift opened up along geographic lines, with the French and German sections taking a more radical position against fascism. The British section found 'itself out of harmony with the present action of the International Executive Committee'.<sup>103</sup> Nevertheless, WILPF did not split completely and the association reached a compromise to sustain its unity.<sup>104</sup> A number of anti-fascist members of WIL were also connected to the Communist Party of Great Britain (CPGB) – such as Ellen Wilkinson and Helen Crawford – yet, typically communism was not compatible with WIL's feminist pacifism.<sup>105</sup> The interwar debate, however, between pacifists and anti-fascists reveals interrelationships between WIL and members of labour, socialist and communist organisations.

### **The Women's International League and the labour movement**

WIL's focus on internationalism and social progress saw its feminist pacifist goals converge with socialist aims and many of its members were linked to a range of labour and socialist organisations.<sup>106</sup> Although, historians have noted that a number of activist women felt compelled to choose between their feminism and support for the Labour and Communist parties.<sup>107</sup> Yet, as Sue Bruley notes, others believed that socialism and

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<sup>102</sup> WIL to the Members of the International Executive Committee, 27 January 1933. WILPF, I:A, Reel 2.

<sup>103</sup> WIL, *Nineteenth Yearly Report, March 1934–March 1935* (London: WIL, 1935), p. 16. WILPF, III, Reel 70.

<sup>104</sup> WILPF's Eighth International Congress was called early to resolve tensions between the national sections, members voted on a new constitution and a third International Chair was selected to mediate between the different factions in the organisation. WILPF, *Women's International League for Peace and Freedom Eighth International Congress: Minutes of Proceedings, Zurich* (Geneva: WILPF, 1934), p. 6. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2. See also Chapter Four.

<sup>105</sup> Hunt and Worley, 'Rethinking British Communist Party Women', p. 19.

<sup>106</sup> Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism between the Wars', p. 210; Laura Beers, *Red Ellen: The Life of Ellen Wilkinson, Socialist, Feminist, Internationalist* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), p. 84.

<sup>107</sup> Richard Evans argues that socialist women and feminist pacifists were incompatible in Evans, *Comrades and Sisters*, p. 5. Yet, Helmut Gruber and Pamela Graves have shed light on the co-operation between feminists and socialist women in Helmut Gruber & Pamela Graves, *Women in Socialism, Socialism and Women, Europe between the Two World Wars* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), p. 4.

feminism ‘enlarged and enriched the other’.<sup>108</sup> Recent literature challenges the assumption that socialist and (“bourgeois”) feminist women could not work together.<sup>109</sup> For example, Marilyn Boxer has called for new histories of feminism that ‘recognize the importance of feminism’s history to the history of the left and to modern history as a whole’,<sup>110</sup> while Lara Vapnek, highlights the ‘multiple contexts from which feminists have initiated engagements with internationalism’ including labour and socialist politics.<sup>111</sup>

Internationalism was a defining feature of WIL: the association claimed that ‘it is this international character which has distinguished it from the first’.<sup>112</sup> Internationalism was also second nature to labour activists, who had promoted proletarian solidarity across borders before the outbreak of war through the Second International.<sup>113</sup> Although Hannam and Hunt argue that ‘in many ways the socialist and women’s internationals were parallel universes, with no organisational links between them’, they do agree that some individual women were able to incorporate both socialist and feminist internationalism into their activism.<sup>114</sup> Rupp suggests that opposition to war formed a ‘fragile thread between socialist and nonsocialist women’,<sup>115</sup> yet broader commitments to social justice also connected socialist and pacifist women. Key socialist women who were able to negotiate socialist and

<sup>108</sup> Sue Bruley, *Leninism, Stalinism and the Women’s Movement in Britain, 1920–1939* (London: Routledge, 2013), p. 16.

<sup>109</sup> Julie Carlier, ‘Forgotten Instance of Women’s International Organising: The Transnational Feminist Network of the Women’s Progressive Society (1893–1898)’, in Oliver Janz and Daniel Schönplüg ed, *Gender History in a Transnational Perspective: Networks, Biographies, Gender Orders* (London: Berghahn Books, 2014), p. 91; Beers, ‘Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism’, p. 215.

<sup>110</sup> Marilyn J. Boxer, ‘Rethinking the Socialist Construction and International Career of the Concept “Bourgeois Feminism”’, *The American Historical Review*, 112:1 (2007), p. 158. Yet, Boxer’s earlier work argued that there were tensions between socialist and ‘bourgeois’ feminists, see Marilyn Boxer and Jean Helen Quataert, *Socialist Women: European Socialist Feminist in the Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries* (New York: Elsevier, 1978), p. ix.

<sup>111</sup> Vapnek, ‘The 1919 International Congress of Working Women’, p. 163..

<sup>112</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1920), p. 1.

<sup>113</sup> Helen McCarthy, ‘The League of Nations, Public Ritual and National Identity in Britain, c.1919–56’, *History Workshop Journal*, 70:1 (2010), p.120; Christine Collette, *The International Faith: Labour’s Attitudes to European Socialism, 1918–39* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women*, p. 167.

<sup>115</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 35. Both feminist pacifists and socialist women were also involved with the UDC, see Christine Collette, *For Labour and for Women: The Women’s Labour League, 1906–18* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989), p. 165.

feminist-pacifist internationalism, included Isabella Ford, Margaret Bondfield, Ethel Snowden, Katharine Bruce Glasier and Helen Crawford – although ‘it became harder to make links between the two worlds’ during the 1920s.<sup>116</sup> Yet, similar tensions between socialists and pacifist are also apparent in the nineteenth century campaign against war.<sup>117</sup> Although socialist and labour politics overlapped, this section avoids conflating the two by focusing primarily on connections between WIL and labour women, yet, at times, the intersections between socialist women and feminist pacifists will also be explored.<sup>118</sup> Shared interests in social reform, particularly on issues relating to the family and maternity, alongside anti-militarism also facilitated co-operation between feminist-pacifist and women active in the labour movement. For example, the 1926 Peacemakers’ Pilgrimage, a WIL-led campaign, incorporated a range of activist women, including women associated with labour, socialist, and communist politics, like Margaret Bondfield, Susan Lawrence, Marion Phillips, Ethel Snowden, Beatrice Webb, Lady Clare Annesley and Ellen Wilkinson.<sup>119</sup>

Nonetheless, existing literature has overlooked the connections between WIL and the labour movement and WIL has been branded ‘a tiny band of courageous and principled women on the far-left fringes of bourgeois-liberal feminism’.<sup>120</sup> The fact that two separate international women’s anti-war congresses were held in 1915 – a socialist women’s conference in Berne and at WILPF’s formative congress at The Hague – has led historians to assume that the two groups of activist women were distinctly separate. Yet, both congresses called for the cessation of hostilities and asserted women’s authority to speak

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>117</sup> Daniel Laqua, ‘Pacifism in Fin-De-Siècle Austria: The Politics and Limits of Peace Activism’, *The Historical Journal*, 57:1 (2014), p. 214.

<sup>118</sup> Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women*, p. 8.

<sup>119</sup> WIL, A Meeting of the Pilgrimage Committee, 30 March 1926. WILPF MF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>120</sup> Evans, *Comrades and Sisters*, p. 130.

out on international relations.<sup>121</sup> British representatives at the socialist congress included Marion Phillips, Mary Longman, Margaret Bondfield and Ada Salter.<sup>122</sup> Notably, Bondfield and Salter were members of the British Committee of the International Women's Congress and labour women organisations were also represented on the British Committee.<sup>123</sup>

Although the relationship between gender and class politics remained complex, their goals often converged. For instance, many WIL members espoused a socialist critique of capitalism. At WILPF's second international congress, Ethel Snowden argued that the *British Daily News*, the *Manchester Guardian*, the British Labour Party and the Socialist Party agreed that 'the economic provisions of the peace treaty ... can only bring the world more ruin and disaster'.<sup>124</sup> Similarly, Ethel Williams described war as one of the manifestations of social inequality and argued that capitalist overproduction 'is in the interest of a small group, and causes unemployment, competition for markets, war or revolution'.<sup>125</sup> WILPF also shared the labour movement's criticism of imperialism, which they associated closely with capitalism, conflict and oppression. WILPF's commission on colonial and economic imperialism reported that 'the natives find themselves in a situation analogous to that of the exploited working and agricultural classes in all countries'.<sup>126</sup>

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<sup>121</sup> The socialist women's congress sent its greetings to the Hague congress. WILPF, 'Greetings to the Congress', *Bericht-Rapport-Report* (Amsterdam: International Committee of Women for Permanent Peace, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>122</sup> 28 delegates from Britain, Germany, France, Russia, Poland, Holland, Switzerland and Italy attended the wartime meeting in Berne. 'A Women's Peace Conference, British and German Delegates' Cordial Relations', *The Times*, 06 April 1915, p. 7.

<sup>123</sup> British Committee of the International Women's Congress, 1915. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>124</sup> Ethel Snowden, 'Evening Speech', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>125</sup> Ethel Williams, 'Political Aspects of a New International Order', *Report of the Fourth Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Washington, May 1 to 7, 1924* (Washington, D.C.: WILPF, 1924). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>126</sup> WILPF, *Report of the Fifth International Congress of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Dublin, July 8 to 15, 1926* (Washington D.C.: WILPF, 1927), p. 85. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.2.



It is worth recalling that ILP member Ethel Snowden ran the Central Information Bureau of the 1917 Women's Peace Crusade from London, along with Margaret Bondfield, Helen Crawford, Charlotte Despard and Katherine Bruce Glasier.<sup>127</sup> The Crusade was a grass-roots campaign, which started in Glasgow in 1916 and was organised by WIL branches, alongside women in the ILP and Women's Labour League during the final two years of the war. Hannam and Hunt describe the Crusade as 'energetic and innovative' as it mobilised working women in their own communities, building on the experience of suffrage organising and reinvigorated the socialist anti-militarist and anti-capitalist response to the Great War.<sup>128</sup>

Many feminist-pacifists, however, struggled to reconcile violent revolution with their visions of a peaceful transformation of society. While sympathising with 'workers who are rising up everywhere to make an end of their exploitation', the association urged 'National Sections to cooperate in seeking methods by which the energies enlisted in creating a new industrial order may do their work in constructive and vigorous ways without violence'.<sup>129</sup> Recognising that their membership was predominantly middle class, WILPF advised 'women like ourselves (is) to prepare the minds of the wealthy and possessing classes, to persuade them to yield without hesitation, and thus save bloodshed', therefore circumventing revolutionary rhetoric.<sup>130</sup> Nonetheless, the international disarmament campaign from the late 1920s generated a level of unity amongst peace activists and socialist anti-militarists. Indeed, Daniel Laqua argues that 'the shared concern for disarmament fostered new alliances and manifested itself in overlapping memberships',

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid, p. 642; Mrs Philip Snowden, 'The Women's Peace Crusade', *The U.D.C.* (September 1917) p. 130. Hull University Archives, UDDC/5/28/11; Women's Peace Crusade, *Central Information Bureau Letter to the Union of Democratic Control*, 12 June 1918. Hull University Archives, UDDC/4/29.

<sup>128</sup> Hannam and Hunt, *Socialist Women*, p. 186.

<sup>129</sup> WILPF, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>130</sup> WILPF, 'Relation of Pacifists to Revolutionary Movements', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

blurring the boundaries between liberal and socialist internationalism.<sup>131</sup> Similarly, Laura Beers demonstrates that WILPF and socialist movements shared a focus economic, military and diplomatic issues, alongside a criticism of capitalism imperialism.<sup>132</sup>

### *Personal connections*

At the association's 1919 congress, Swanwick commented that the earlier Hague congress had drawn together three groups of women: feminists, peace activists and 'those who had been working for the improvement of the condition of the masses of the people'.<sup>133</sup>

Recognising that they had their differences, Swanwick argued that the three movements shared 'a common recognition...that freedom lies at the bottom of these great problems'.<sup>134</sup>

Although not a socialist organisation, WILPF was a radical women's association. Rupp argues that certain members, at one time or another, identified as socialist, including International Secretary Emily Greene Balch; German members Lida Gustava Heymann and Anita Augspurg; and French leaders Gabrielle Duchêne and Camille Drevet.<sup>135</sup> Dutch organiser of the 1915 congress, Aletta Jacobs, thought it 'highly probable that a large part of the membership of this congress belong to the Social Democratic or Communist party'.<sup>136</sup> As has been mentioned in Chapter Four, WILPF members were targeted due to their proximity and sympathy with international socialism.<sup>137</sup> Although WIL remained non-partisan, Sybil Oldfield describes the majority of its members as 'left leaning'.<sup>138</sup> Many suffragists – including Courtney and Marshall, who went on to co-found WIL in 1915 – had been influential in the formation of the NUWSS' Election Fighting Fund, which

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<sup>131</sup> Laqua, 'Democratic Politics and the League of Nations', p. 185.

<sup>132</sup> Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism between the Wars', p. 214.

<sup>133</sup> Helena M. Swanwick, 'Evening Speech', *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>134</sup> Ibid.

<sup>135</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p. 31.

<sup>136</sup> Aletta Jacobs quoted in Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p.31.

<sup>137</sup> E.M. Pye to J. Addams, H. Hull & E.G. Balch, 3 July 1933. WILPF, I:A, Reel 2; 'Socialist-Pacifist Movement in America Is an Absolutely Fundamental and Integral Part of International Socialism (Lusk Report)', *Dearborn Independent* (1923). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part III: Series I, Box 1.

<sup>138</sup> Oldfield, 'England's Cassandras', p. 91.

developed a close relationship between the suffrage movement and the Labour Party.<sup>139</sup>

Numerous individual WIL members also supported the Independent Labour Party (ILP), Labour Party and other socialist and communist endeavours.

Isabella Ford was a founding member of WIL. June Hannam describes Ford's work for socialism, feminism, humanitarianism and pacifism as 'branches of the same great tree', which is a useful analogy to depict the activism of many WIL members.<sup>140</sup> Ford 'worked unremittingly for Labour, and as unremittingly for the Suffrage—perhaps most passionately of all for Peace'.<sup>141</sup> Ford's activism in the labour movement, the emancipation of women and peace were connected in 'the great battle for liberty and human progress'.<sup>142</sup> The activism of many WIL members followed similar trajectories from social reform work, labour politics, suffrage campaigns and peace work. Pethick Lawrence worked concurrently for the women's and labour movements, writing that after equal franchise in 1928 her interest returned to her 'first love – concern for the economic and social advancement of the people who do the heavy and arduous work of the world'.<sup>143</sup> Veteran suffragist, Charlotte Despard was also heavily involved in labour and socialist politics. A well-respected orator, she regularly spoke on platforms for the ILP, trade unions, Labour Party, the No Conscription Fellowship, WIL and the Women's Peace Crusade. She supported the 1917 convention of Workers and Soldiers Delegates in Leeds and was elected to the Workers' Socialist Federation. In 1918, she stood unsuccessfully as parliamentary candidate for Labour in Battersea, before turning her attention to the situation in Ireland. She also joined the Communist Party of Great Britain in the 1930s.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>139</sup> Vellacott, *Pacifists, Patriots and the Vote*, p. 5.

<sup>140</sup> J. Arnott, 'Isabella O. Ford: An Appreciation', *Leeds Weekly Citizen*, 19 Feb 1924 in June Hannam, *Isabella Ford* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989), p. 4.

<sup>141</sup> WIL, 'Isabella O. Ford – In Memoriam', *Monthly News Sheet* (September 1924), p. 3.

<sup>142</sup> Ethel Williams, 'Isabella Ormiston Ford', *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1924), p. 2.

<sup>143</sup> Pethick Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World*, p. 336.

<sup>144</sup> Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement*, pp. 164–5.

For other WIL members, their political allegiances shifted over the course of their suffrage work. For instance, Ethel Williams severed her ties with the Liberals when they failed to support women's suffrage. During the war, she joined the UDC and organised meetings of the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils.<sup>145</sup> She remained active in WIL throughout the interwar years, serving as Vice Chair and then Vice President of the association from 1923 onwards. Similarly, Marshall's allegiances shifted from Liberal to Labour through her support for women's suffrage. Vellacott describes Marshall's hope for an 'ethical socialism' that could change political, economic and social structures through peaceful means.<sup>146</sup>

Moreover, two of the Labour Party's first female MPs were also involved in the formation of WIL. Margaret Bondfield – a prominent trade unionist – was a member of WIL's Executive Committee between 1915 and 1918. Bondfield was a pacifist who had opposed the Boer War and worked closely with E.D. Morel – President of the UDC – in the national administrative council of the ILP from 1913.<sup>147</sup> She also attended the International Socialist and Labour Conference in Berne, 1919 with Ethel Snowden, where she made contact with Madeleine Rolland and Gabrielle Duchêne of the French WILPF section and Rosika Schwimmer. In addition, on this trip to Switzerland she addressed a meeting of the Swiss WILPF.<sup>148</sup> In 1917 – as noted previously – Bondfield, Despard, Snowden and Pethick Lawrence attempted to travel to the Soviet Union in the aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution to reach out to Russian women. Representing the 'Women's Labour and Co-operative movement, the Suffragist movement, the Internationalist movement and the Socialist movement', the contingent reveals co-operation between

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<sup>145</sup> Todd, 'Ethel Williams', p. 20.

<sup>146</sup> Vellacott, *From Liberal to Labour*, p. 368.

<sup>147</sup> Bondfield, *A Life's Work*, p. 137.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 163–8.

women's and labour activism in WIL.<sup>149</sup> Bondfield was first elected in 1923 as a Labour MP, yet she continued to be active in the women's peace movement and addressed the Peacemakers' Pilgrimage demonstration alongside Pethick Lawrence, Millicent Garrett Fawcett and Ellen Wilkinson. As illustrated in Chapter Three, the Pilgrimage mobilised support nationwide, including amongst striking workers as it 'followed hard on the heels of the General Strike'.<sup>150</sup>

Fellow Labour MP, Ellen Wilkinson attended WILPF's congresses in 1919 and 1929 as part of the British delegation and was a member of Manchester WIL's delegation to Ireland in 1920.<sup>151</sup> Matt Perry describes Wilkinson as a 'core networker' as she 'bridged (both socialist and communist) labour movements and the women's movement in transnational networks.'<sup>152</sup> Although her involvement with WIL seems to have been intermittent during the interwar years, in 1933 Wilkinson was selected as a Vice President of WIL. In local politics, Eleanor Barton was elected to Sheffield City Council as a joint Labour and Co-operative candidate in 1919. She was also a member of WIL's Executive Committee during the Great War and was prominent in the Women's Co-operative Guild, becoming Secretary of the Sheffield Guild and Chair of the Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations. Barton combined her work in the co-operative movement with her work for peace. In 1927, she signed a letter in support of war resistance demonstrations.<sup>153</sup> In 1934, she chaired the National Conference of Labour Women, which argued that a socialist government must use the League of Nations 'to give an effective

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<sup>149</sup> The WIL delegation to Russia was refused passports to travel. WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1917), p. 2.

<sup>150</sup> Liddington, *The Long Road to Greenham Common*, p. 145.

<sup>151</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1920), p. 1; Matt Perry, 'Red Ellen Wilkinson' *Her Ideas, Movements and World* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015), p. 73.

<sup>152</sup> Perry, 'In Search of "Red Ellen" Wilkinson', pp. 227–8.

<sup>153</sup> Other signatories included WIL's Kathleen Courtney, George Lansbury and Fenner Brockway of the No More War Movement. 'War Resistance Weekend', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 June 1927, p. 14.

lead for peace'.<sup>154</sup> Barton's activism demonstrates the overlap between the labour and co-operative movements and the women's peace movement during the interwar years.

### ***Collaboration: WIL and the Women's Co-operative Guild***

Shared aims for democracy, internationalism and peace brought WIL into close contact with the labour movement. Although there were significant differences between absolute pacifists and socialist anti-militarists, WIL was able to work closely with the labour movement on many occasions, in particular the Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG). The Guild, founded in 1883, was a women's auxiliary to the co-operative movement. The association proved popular with housewives and by 1921 claimed to have over 50,000 members. Although Barbara Blaszak asserts that the Guilds' 'relational feminism' limited its accomplishments, Jean Gaffin and David Thoms have noted that the association became more radical in the 1920s and 1930s; promoting a new social order, criticising capitalism, supporting Labour and Co-operative candidates in elections and backing trade union action.<sup>155</sup>

The WCG's interwar work also focused on maternity welfare, birth control and reform to the divorce laws to ensure equality in marriage.<sup>156</sup> Like WIL, the association urged its members to become politically active, promoted the study of international politics, and lobbied for peace. Despite the divergence between the peace and labour movements during the latter half of the 1930s – especially in response to the Spanish Civil War – Pamela Graves argues that the WCG 'helped to sustain the pacifist minority' in the

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<sup>154</sup> 'Building for Peace: Cost of the League. Labour Women's Conference', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 June 1934, p. 19.

<sup>155</sup> Barbara J. Blaszak, *The Matriarchs of England's Co-operative Movement: A Study in Gender Politics and Female Leadership, 1883–1921* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2000), p. 23; Jean Gaffin and David Thoms, *Caring and Sharing, The Centenary History of the Co-operative Women's Guild* (Manchester: Holyoake Books, 1993), p. 109.

<sup>156</sup> Gillian Scott, 'A "Trade Union for Married Women": The Women's Co-operative Guild 1914–1920', in Oldfield ed., *This Working-Day World*, p. 22.

movement.<sup>157</sup> The Guild's magazine, *Woman's Outlook*, regularly featured articles about peace, disarmament, international relations and the League of Nations alongside its features on Co-operative conferences, health and beauty, film reviews, household advice, recipes, fashion, knitting patterns and short stories. For example, in June 1934 *Women's Outlook* included articles titled 'Dare we hope? Prospects before the Disarmament Conference' and 'In defence of our sisters, The "League" and the Traffic in Women'.<sup>158</sup> In 1933, the WCG produced the white poppy – an iconic emblem for peace – and issued a Peace Pledge Card.<sup>159</sup> The Guild held annual peace celebrations and Peace Days in schools to promote international understanding.<sup>160</sup> Similarly, WIL focused on education to secure peace and internationalism through the transformation of public opinion – the association focused on reforming the school curriculum to promote international understanding.<sup>161</sup> The wider co-operative movement had long advocated the education of its members on the principles and methods of co-operation.<sup>162</sup> Both WIL and WCG also campaigned against war toys and war films, which they argued normalised militarism in children.<sup>163</sup>

Furthermore, the WCG was also committed to internationalism. It became the British section of the International Women's Co-operative Guild (IWCG) when it was formed in 1921.<sup>164</sup> The IWCG's formative congress – led by Austrian WILPF member Emmy Freundlich and WCG's Honora Enfield – aimed to bring 'a closer Union between

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<sup>157</sup> Graves, *Labour Women*, p. 210.

<sup>158</sup> Women's Co-operative Guild, *Woman's Outlook* (June 1934), pp. 501–2. Hull University Archives, UDCW/7/44.

<sup>159</sup> Women's Co-operative Guild, *Peace Pledge Card* (c.1933). SCPC, Collective Box, CDG-B Great Britain.

<sup>160</sup> Women's Co-operative Guild, *Agenda for Peace Celebration in Armistice Week* (1928). SCPC, Collective Box, CDG-B Great Britain; E. Barton to J. Seminaris, National Council for Prevention of War, 1 October 1936. SCPC, Collective Box, CDG-B, Great Britain.

<sup>161</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1919), p. 3.

<sup>162</sup> Nicole Robertson, *The Co-operative Movement and Communities in Britain, 1914–1960* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 101.

<sup>163</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1928), p. 4; Women's Co-operative Guild, *Forty-Eighth Annual Report, May 1930–May 1931* (London: Co-operative Printing Society, 1931), p. 23. Hull University Archives, UDCW/2/11; Rachel Waltner Goossen, 'Disarming the Toy Store and Reloading the Shopping Cart: Resistance to Violent Consumer Culture', *Peace and Change*, 38:3 (2013), p. 331.

<sup>164</sup> IWCG, *Report of the First International Conference of Co-operative Women* (1921), p. 2. Hull University Archives, UDCX/2/1; Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 345.

the Co-operative women of all lands'.<sup>165</sup> The wider British co-operative movement had strong links with co-operators in other nations. The International Co-operative Alliance was founded at a congress held in London in 1895.<sup>166</sup> The Alliance promoted peace on the eve of the Great War, which they linked to co-operative principles and international trade.<sup>167</sup> The IWCG sought equal status with male co-operators in the Alliance, whilst emphasising its identity as the 'Mothers' International'.<sup>168</sup> The association asserted that 'the mothers of the world, united internationally on the common basis of co-operation, can destroy the very roots of war'.<sup>169</sup> In comparison, WIL also emphasised maternalist pacifism, describing militarism as an 'outrage on motherhood'.<sup>170</sup> As illustrated in Chapter One, WIL's relationship with maternalism was complex and the association linked motherhood to its radical feminist pacifist critique of war. WIL asserted that militarism posed the greatest threat to the progress of feminism.<sup>171</sup> Eileen Yeo argues that before the Great War activist women subverted the terms of motherhood and traditional gender roles to demand citizenship.<sup>172</sup> Similarly, many WIL and WCG members used women's unique status and understanding of international relations to create a space outside male-dominated national politics and establish a role for women in the international political sphere.

Shared concerns for internationalism and peace facilitated frequent interaction between WIL and WCG during the interwar period. In 1922, WCG and IWCG were

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<sup>165</sup> IWCG, *Report of the First International Conference of Co-operative Women* (1921), p. 2. Hull University Archives, UDCX/2/1.

<sup>166</sup> Johnston Birchall, *The International Co-operative Movement* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p. 42.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid., p. 47; Mary Hilson, 'A Consumers' International? The International Cooperative Alliance and Cooperative Internationalism, 1918–1939: A Nordic Perspective', *International Review of Social History*, 56:2 (2011), pp. 203–33.

<sup>168</sup> IWCG, *The Women's International and the International Co-operative Alliance* (1921), p. 3. Hull University Archives, UDCX/2/1; Naomi Black, 'The Mothers' International: The Women's Co-operative Guild and Feminist Pacifism', *Women's Studies International Forum*, 7:6 (1984), p. 471.

<sup>169</sup> WCG, *Fortieth Annual Report, May 1922–May 1923* (London: Co-operative Printing Society, 1923), p. 8. Hull University Archives, UDCW/2/10.

<sup>170</sup> Marshall, 'Women and War', p. 40.

<sup>171</sup> Royden, *War and the Woman's Movement*. TWL@LSE, 7AMR/2/30.

<sup>172</sup> Yeo, 'The Creation of "Motherhood"', pp. 201–18.



represented at the peace conference, which WILPF organised at The Hague.<sup>173</sup>

Guildswomen were also represented on the National Council for the Prevention of War; the Women's Advisory Committee to the League of Nations Union; and the Peace Committee of the Society of Friends alongside WIL.<sup>174</sup> The WCG was one of the twenty-nine member societies of the 1928 Women's Peace Crusade based at WIL headquarters in London and the association collected signatures for the Disarmament Petition.<sup>175</sup> Emmy Freundlich and Honora Enfield, as President and Secretary of the IWCG, were present in Geneva alongside WILPF representatives for the presentation of the petitions in February 1932.<sup>176</sup>

The link between WIL and the WCG was formalised through affiliation of WCG branches to WIL. In an attempt 'to carry our message to a large body of women', WIL accepted the affiliation of like-minded associations. WIL urged its local branches to apply this scheme more widely, to extend its sphere of influence and to increase connections with other women's organisations, so long as they shared WIL's primary goals.<sup>177</sup> Many of the organisations officially linked to WIL were labour women's associations, including branches of the Labour Party's Women's Sections and WCGs. In 1924, twenty-three local Guilds were affiliated to the national WIL; an additional seven Guilds were affiliated to local WIL branches.<sup>178</sup> Evidently, a focus on the ways in which WIL was connected to the labour movement, particularly through the case-study of WCG, extends our interpretation

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<sup>173</sup> WCG, *Fortieth Annual Report, May 1922–May 1923* (London: Co-operative Printing Society, 1923), p. 30. Hull University Archives, UDCW/2/10.

<sup>174</sup> WCG, *Forty-Eighth Annual Report, May 1930–May 1931* (London, Co-operative Printing Society, 1931), p. 7. Hull University Archives, UDCW/2/11.

<sup>175</sup> Women's Peace Crusade, *Election Campaign for the return of a Parliament of Peacemakers* (London: WIL, 1929), p. 1. SCPC, WPC, CDG-B Great Britain.

<sup>176</sup> ICWG, *Circular Letter*, 15 February 1932, p. 3. Hull University Archives, UDCX/8/1.

<sup>177</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: WIL, 1925), p. 19. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

of the women's movement during the interwar years.<sup>179</sup> Both WIL and WCG focused on the important contribution that women could make in the political sphere, supported peace and internationalism.

### **The Women's International League and liberal internationalism**

Support for an international peacekeeping organisation gained support in Britain throughout the Great War and was a prominent feature of WIL's agenda during the interwar years.<sup>180</sup> Yet, the ideas of liberal internationalism and a transnational peace movement emerged earlier during the nineteenth century. Duncan Bell identifies two strands of liberal thought that diagnosed the causes of war and offered alternatives to secure peace. Structural liberal arguments considered the failure of co-operation between states as the cause of war, arguing that free trade and international law could secure peace. Radical liberal thought identified domestic politics, in particular the control of a small group of privileged elites as the primary cause of war, advocating a democratic control of foreign policy to prevent war.<sup>181</sup> Most liberal internationalists supported the idea of a 'league of nations' after 1918, which adhered to the liberal faith in parliamentary procedure and the peaceful negotiation of disputes.<sup>182</sup>

The formation of the League of Nations in 1919 provided a focus for those who believed that international law would prevent future wars. Helen McCarthy has argued that the popularity of liberal internationalism alongside a vibrant participatory civic culture during the interwar years led to the success of non-partisan voluntary associations, such as

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<sup>179</sup> Caitríona Beaumont argues for a 'broader and more accurate account of the political and social activities of women during the interwar period': Beaumont, 'Citizens Not Feminists', p. 413.

<sup>180</sup> Summers, 'Gaps in the Record', p. 219.

<sup>181</sup> Duncan Bell, 'Before the Democratic Peace: Racial Utopianism, Empire and the Abolition of War', *European Journal of International Relations*, 20:3 (2014), p. 650.

<sup>182</sup> Donald S. Birn, *The League of Nations Union, 1918–1945* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p. 6.

the League of Nations Union (LNU).<sup>183</sup> The Union was liberal internationalist and promoted the value of participation in the League. Formed in November 1918 as a merger of the existing League of Nations Society and the League of Free Nations Association, the Union was also affiliated to the International Federation of League of Nations Societies (IFLNS), which from its base in Brussels co-ordinated League of Nations societies in over forty countries by the mid-1930s.<sup>184</sup> The British LNU was the most popular, boasting a membership of 400,000 in 3,036 branches at its peak in 1931, alongside an ‘extensive network of corporate members’.<sup>185</sup> Michael Pugh describes the LNU as a ‘powerful social movement’ and Ceadel labels it the ‘world’s most substantial peace association’.<sup>186</sup>

The LNU’s supporters were found in all the major political parties, in peace societies, trade unions, church groups and other voluntary associations, which allowed it to reach a wide section of the British population and mobilise broad support, particularly throughout the 1920s and early 1930s – before the issue of sanctions divided opinions within the wider peace movement.<sup>187</sup> The LNU’s broad base created widespread consensus in support of the League of Nations. By remaining non-partisan the Union was able to attract MPs from across the political spectrum, intellectuals and associations which also adopted a ‘non-party’ nature.<sup>188</sup> The LNU had many crossovers with WIL ideals through its shared liberal beliefs in progress, social justice, equality of sovereign states, the right to self-determination, international free trade, arbitration and international law.<sup>189</sup>

In comparison, the resolutions produced at the 1915 women’s congress called for the organisation of a ‘Society of Nations’, including a permanent International Court of

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<sup>183</sup> McCarthy, ‘Parties, Voluntary Associations, and Democratic Politics’, p. 891; Davies, ‘Internationalism in a Divided World’, p. 227.

<sup>184</sup> McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p. 4.

<sup>185</sup> McCarthy, ‘Leading from the Centre’, p. 529.

<sup>186</sup> Pugh, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 1; Ceadel, *Semi-Detached Idealists*, p. 240.

<sup>187</sup> McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p. 2; Pugh, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 24.

<sup>188</sup> McCarthy, ‘Leading from the Centre’, p. 534; Birn, *The League of Nations Union*, p. 26.

<sup>189</sup> Pugh, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 2; Laity, *The British Peace Movement*, p. 9.

Justice and a permanent International Conference to deal with proposals for international cooperation between states.<sup>190</sup> The organisation also promoted the principle of self-determination and questioned colonial systems and the status of colonial peoples. Notably, President Woodrow Wilson's liberal internationalist Fourteen Points closely mirrored the resolutions produced at the Hague congress.<sup>191</sup> Moreover, both the LNU and WIL valued the role of public opinion as a check upon governments and promoted transparent diplomacy.<sup>192</sup> McCarthy argues that the LNU's educational work to transform public opinion, particularly in the wake of the extended franchise, became a priority and thus demonstrated continuity with 'a longer liberal tradition which placed the development of man's moral and rational faculties at the heart of good citizenship'.<sup>193</sup> Similarly, WIL valued education to promote internationalism, peace and citizenship. At the association's second international congress, WILPF created an education committee.<sup>194</sup> WILPF lobbied for the transformation of history and religious curriculums in schools and the British section produced a bibliography of suitable textbooks to promote an international viewpoint.<sup>195</sup> 'Recognising the necessity of imbuing the minds of the young with thoughts of peace and universal brotherhood', the WIL Executive Committee discussed the introduction of an annual League of Nations Day in schools to reinforce the principles of the League.<sup>196</sup>

WIL also produced vast numbers of pamphlets on international law and the League of Nations, alongside the distribution of its *Monthly News Sheet*, which contained regular

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<sup>190</sup> WPP, Report of the International Congress of Women (USA: Roy G. Harper, 1915), p. 14. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>191</sup> Vellacott, 'Feminism as If All People Mattered', p. 379.

<sup>192</sup> WPP, Report of the International Congress of Women (USA: Roy G. Harper, 1915), p. 13. WILPF, I:D, Reel 16.

<sup>193</sup> McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p. 20.

<sup>194</sup> WILPF, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>195</sup> Ibid.

<sup>196</sup> WIL, *Ninth Yearly Report, January–December 1924* (London: WIL, 1925), p. 18. WILPF, III, Reel 68.

articles on international relations and commented on the proceedings of League Assemblies. The association encouraged its members to study issues in relation to peace and international law by holding regular conferences and study circles at both the national and local level. The organisation also held larger public lectures on themes of international law – for example, it ran a series of four lectures on the Draft Protocol for the Pacific Settlement of Disputes, during November and December 1924. Experts on international law, including Swanwick and Philip Noel Baker, a Labour MP and member of the LNU's Executive Committee, addressed the meetings.<sup>197</sup>

### ***Personal connections***

McCarthy argues that the LNU's centrist policies resonated with feminists who operated across party lines.<sup>198</sup> A number of leading suffragists were active in the LNU, including President of NUSEC and independent MP Eleanor Rathbone, and peace activist and President of IWSEC Margaery Corbett Ashby.<sup>199</sup> WIL's Chair from 1923 to 1933, Kathleen Courtney, was also involved with the LNU during the interwar years, joining its Executive Committee in 1928 before being selected as a Vice Chair of the Union in 1938.<sup>200</sup> Courtney was the longest standing member of WIL's Executive Committee during the interwar years; she served on the committee from 1915 until 1934. A member of the 1915 British Committee of the International Women's Congress, Courtney became a Vice Chair of WIL in 1917, Chair in 1923, and President in 1932 until she resigned in 1933. During the interwar years, she remained committed to women's suffrage as Vice President of the NUSEC, and chaired the Family Endowment Council from 1923. Courtney was avidly interested in international affairs, and promoted arbitration and disarmament. She

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<sup>197</sup> Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>198</sup> McCarthy, 'Leading from the Centre', p. 535.

<sup>199</sup> Ibid., p. 531.

<sup>200</sup> McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p. 189.

attended meetings of the League of Nations in Geneva to report for WIL's *Monthly News Sheet* and served as Vice President of the Peace and Disarmament Committee of Women's International Organisations.<sup>201</sup> WIL members Swanwick and Royden joined Courtney in the LNU. Vera Brittain and Winifred Holtby were both also active in the LNU, and were frequent speakers on LNU platforms.<sup>202</sup> As mentioned earlier, Brittain and Holtby were also members of the feminist Six Point Group and became Vice Presidents of WIL in 1933. Like many members of WIL, they were also connected to other activist associations, such as the UDC. As writers, they were keen to contribute to the UDC journal *Foreign Affairs*, edited by Swanwick.<sup>203</sup>

However, the centrist alliance of the LNU unravelled after the Manchurian crisis of 1931, causing a drop in LNU subscriptions.<sup>204</sup> Swanwick, who had been an LNU member since 1924, became extremely critical of the association for its blind support for the League of Nations and its backing of rearmament and military sanctions.<sup>205</sup> Swanwick's *Collective Insecurity*, published in 1937 in the aftermath of Abyssinia and the Spanish Civil War, outlines her opposition to League sanctions, which she argued were 'doomed to failure'.<sup>206</sup> In contrast, Eleanor Rathbone's *War Can Be Averted* supported the system of war prevention.<sup>207</sup> Vera Brittain also resigned from the LNU, but in favour of the absolutism of the Peace Pledge Union (PPU).<sup>208</sup> Royden also joined the PPU and became a Vice President of WIL in 1936 after a long absence from the Executive Committee. Royden remained an absolute pacifist until 1939, when she concluded that war could be

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<sup>201</sup> Kathleen D. Courtney, *Carte de Presse, XIIème Assemblée de la Société des Nations* (1932). TWL@ LSE, 7KDC/K/09.

<sup>202</sup> Brittain, *Testament of Friendship*, p. 376.

<sup>203</sup> Vera Brittain to Winifred Holtby, 18 February 1926. Vera Brittain and Geoffrey Handley-Taylor, *Selected Letters of Winifred Holtby and Vera Brittain (1920–1935)* (London: A. Brown & Sons, 1960), p. 92.

<sup>204</sup> Pugh, *Liberal Internationalism*, p. 105.

<sup>205</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 378; Eglin, 'Women Pacifists in Interwar Britain', p. 154

<sup>206</sup> Swanwick, *Collective Insecurity*, p. 15.

<sup>207</sup> Eleanor Rathbone, *War Can Be Averted: The Achievability of Collective Security* (London: Gollancz, 1938).

<sup>208</sup> Eglin, 'Women Pacifists in Interwar Britain', p. 155.

justified in the battle against fascism. In contrast, Courtney resigned from her role in WIL in 1933, due to fundamental disagreements over the constitution of WILPF.<sup>209</sup> Courtney's activism focused on the LNU in the late 1930s when she became its Vice-Chair. The differences between Courtney and Royden reflect the rifts within the peace movement from the mid-1930s. The optimistic consensus in the 1920s dissipated, revealing tensions between pacifists and pacifist internationalists. Nevertheless, this section will consider the connections between WIL and the LNU before 1935. The LNU often supported WIL campaigns, such as the Peacemakers' Pilgrimage and the Disarmament Petition.<sup>210</sup> Moreover, WIL members were instrumental in the organisation of the LNU's most successful campaign; the Peace Ballot.

### ***Collaborative action: the Peace Ballot***

WIL collaborated with the LNU throughout the interwar years, distributing the Union's literature, attending and contributing to conferences and supporting campaigns. For example, WIL was represented on the Women's Advisory Committee of the LNU and in 1928 was represented at the Union's conferences on 'International Arbitration' and 'Forced and Contract Labour'.<sup>211</sup> In return, the LNU supported WIL's campaigns. The LNU was a champion of WIL's disarmament campaign, helping the petition to reach the broader LNU constituency. Lord Robert Cecil – Chair of the LNU – wrote to Courtney, commending the petition 'to the support of all lovers of peace'.<sup>212</sup> The Union circulated the women's disarmament petition at its Peace Declaration meeting at the Albert Hall on 11

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<sup>209</sup> Kathleen Courtney resigned as President of WIL in May 1933 due to differences of opinion between herself and other members of the International Executive Committee. This is explored further in Chapter Four. Catherine Marshall, Notes on the Relation of National Sections to the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (c.1933), p. 2. WILPF, I:B, Reel 10.

<sup>210</sup> The 1926 Peacemakers' Pilgrimage and WIL's involvement with the Disarmament Petition are explored in detail in Chapter Three.

<sup>211</sup> WIL, *Thirteenth Yearly Report, February 1928–February 1929* (London: WIL, 1929), p. 14. WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>212</sup> WIL, *The Story of the Disarmament Declaration* (Essex: The Talbot Press, c.1932), p. 3. WILPF, III, Reel 70.

July 1931, prompting thousands of additional signatures. The Union also published the petition under its own auspices, encouraging LNU members to join the campaign as if it were their own, which saw the signatures ‘pour in’.<sup>213</sup>

In 1935, the LNU’s ‘Peace Ballot’ became the association’s biggest publicity success.<sup>214</sup> Perhaps inspired by previous attempts to poll the population – including WIL’s own petition – the Ballot aimed to obtain ‘a national expression of opinion on Peace and War, Disarmament and Security’.<sup>215</sup> Courtney described the campaign as ‘a venture of faith’ – faith in the ‘great army of volunteers to carry out the arduous work’ and ‘faith in the ability of the average citizen’.<sup>216</sup> She also valued the educational function of the ballot, and hoped that it would restore public faith in the League of Nations and promote international cooperation in the aftermath of the Manchurian crisis. Between November 1934 and June 1935, the LNU used the Ballot to ascertain public attitudes towards total and unilateral disarmament and collective security.<sup>217</sup> Literature on the Ballot credits its success with the unpaid services of hundreds and thousands of volunteers, many of whom were women.<sup>218</sup> Local branches of WIL supported the LNU campaign by distributing the questionnaire and holding public meetings on the ‘Peace Challenge to Public Opinion’.<sup>219</sup> In the January *News Sheet*, WIL encouraged ‘a new drive of this endeavour to show that the people of Britain desire peace’.<sup>220</sup>

The LNU considered the Peace Ballot its greatest success. The results demonstrated overwhelming support for the League of Nations and disarmament. The Ballot also demonstrated significant support for the use of sanctions against an aggressor, although

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<sup>213</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>214</sup> McCarthy, ‘The League of Nations, Public Ritual and National Identity’, p. 112.

<sup>215</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1934), p. 2.

<sup>216</sup> Ibid.

<sup>217</sup> Ceadel, ‘The First British Referendum’, p. 818.

<sup>218</sup> McCarthy, *The British People and the League of Nations*, p. 200.

<sup>219</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (December 1934), p. 4; WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1935), p. 4.

<sup>220</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (January 1935), p. 1.



critics argued that rearmament would be necessary for an effective collective security policy.<sup>221</sup> The Ballot inspired WILPF's 'People's Mandate' campaign from 1935 to 1936, which collected 10 million declarations from forty countries calling on governments to fulfil the pledges of the Covenant and the Kellogg-Briand Pact on the outlawry of war.<sup>222</sup> Thus, it is evident that there was substantial support and co-operation between WIL and the LNU. Moreover, the two associations influenced one another. A commitment to the principles of internationalism and the establishment of international law to secure peace allowed these two groups to converge and overlap.

### **The Women's International League and humanitarian associations**

WIL's commitment to internationalism was not restricted to inter-governmental relations or the League of Nations, however. Karen Offen has shown how the women's movement used the term 'international' as we would coin 'transnational' to refer to issues such as peace, disarmament, the trafficking of women and children, alongside the creation of international law and humanitarian relief.<sup>223</sup> Bruno Cabanes argues that the Great War 'fostered deep and long-term pacifist feeling among a substantial population, and made the protection of all the war's victims, civilians and soldiers alike, an absolute necessity', drawing together a collection of activists and supporters.<sup>224</sup> Similarly, Kevin O'Sullivan, Matthew Hilton and Juliano Fiori have demonstrated that humanitarianism accelerated during the First and Second World Wars.<sup>225</sup> Many WIL members participated in relief work during the Great War and the association co-operated with humanitarian societies through joint campaigns and fund-raising during the interwar period. WIL was connected in multiple and intricate ways to key individuals and organisations, which provided

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<sup>221</sup> Birn, *The League of Nations Union*, p. 153.

<sup>222</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1936), p. 4.

<sup>223</sup> Offen, 'Understanding International Feminism', p. 27.

<sup>224</sup> Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism, 1918–1924* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), p. 1.

<sup>225</sup> Kevin O'Sullivan, Matthew Hilton and Juliano Fiori, 'Humanitarianisms in Context', *European Review of History: Revue Européenne d'Histoire*, 23:1–2 (2016), p. 6.

humanitarian relief, such as the Fight the Famine Council, Save the Children, the Friends' War Victims Relief Committee and the International Committee for Russian Relief.

Oldfield defines a humanitarian as 'one who puts the needs of *humanitas* first, above the claims of his or her own immediate group' and lists a number of WIL members in her biographical dictionary of women humanitarians.<sup>226</sup> Similarly, Rebecca Gill argues that humanitarians, such as Emily Hobhouse demonstrated a sense of 'cosmopolitan patriotism', asserting that the 'true interests of the state were concomitant with the flourishing of humanity as a whole'.<sup>227</sup> This rhetoric of patriotism and 'spiritual internationalism' was popular within WIL. In the report of the 1915 congress, Hobhouse claimed that 'the women of the Hague Congress advance a step further and think for the whole world'.<sup>228</sup> Similarly, Baughan has noted that internationalism played a key role in the provision of humanitarian relief, although internationalism was complicated by national and imperial attitudes.<sup>229</sup> Shaped by the politics of its era, humanitarianism often preserved paternalist hierarchies despite its commitment to a progressive moral vision. Michael Barnett has described activism from the late-eighteenth century until 1939 as 'imperial humanitarianism'.<sup>230</sup> As noted in the previous chapter, WIL was a progressive women's organisation, yet it was also influenced by the discourse of empire.

Humanitarianism and the discourse of human rights are closely linked, although the two are not synonymous.<sup>231</sup> Gill demonstrates that it is possible to trace a trajectory of human rights language from the Boer War through to the 1923 Declaration of the Rights of

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<sup>226</sup> Oldfield, *Women Humanitarians*, p. xi.

<sup>227</sup> Gill, 'Networks of Concern', p. 829.

<sup>228</sup> Emily Hobhouse, 'Foreword', *Bericht-Rapport-Report*, (Amsterdam: ICWPP, 1915). SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>229</sup> Gill, *Calculating Compassion*, p. 6; Baughan, 'Every Citizen of Empire', p. 231.

<sup>230</sup> Michael Barnett, *Empire of Humanity: A History of Humanitarianism* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2011), p. 7.

<sup>231</sup> Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism*, p. 4; Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 16.

Children, initiated by Save the Children Fund.<sup>232</sup> Although Samuel Moyn asserts that human rights discourse pre-1970 supported the preservation of the nation-state, WIL's focus on rights, freedoms and internationalism through a discourse of shared humanity facilitated its connections with humanitarian and human rights networks during the interwar period.<sup>233</sup> Indeed, Ingrid Sharp traces WILPF's commitment to human rights and justice from its 1915 Congress to its influence on United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 on the inclusion of women in peace building, adopted in 2000.<sup>234</sup> In comparison to the provision of humanitarian relief, imperialism also influenced the rhetoric of human rights and was often based on the notion that Anglo-Saxonism was 'the epitome of universal principles of civilization'.<sup>235</sup>

WIL was concerned with the rights of minorities, subject peoples in colonies, refugees and advocated the establishment of international institutions for the protection of such rights. WIL's interests overlapped with those of humanitarian and human rights organisations, as it frequently expressed concern for humanity and the 'safeguarding of the political and economic rights'.<sup>236</sup> Nonetheless, in her autobiography Swanwick articulated that 'WIL had made it a rule not to branch off from its educative work into relief'.<sup>237</sup> Her 'exception' to WIL's rule was its gendered humanitarian response to provide relief from the effects of the allied naval blockade in 1919 through the rubber teat appeal. Despite Swanwick's assertion that WIL remained a political and educational association, it was closely tied to humanitarian networks that found a new resonance during and after the Great War and many of its members participated in humanitarian relief work.

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<sup>232</sup> Gill, 'Networks of Concern', p. 829.

<sup>233</sup> Samuel Moyn, *The Last Utopia: Human Rights in History* (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2010), p. 8.

<sup>234</sup> Sharp, 'Feminist Peace Activism 1915 and 2010', p. 170.

<sup>235</sup> Kevin Grant, 'The British Empire, International Government and Human Rights', *History Compass*, 11:8 (2013), p. 573.

<sup>236</sup> WILPF, *Report of the International Congress of Women, Zurich, May 12 to 17 1919* (Geneva: WILPF, 1920), p. 21. SCPC, WILPF (DG043), Part II: Reel 141.1.

<sup>237</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p.315.

### *Personal connections*

From the late nineteenth-century, a significant number of middle-class women undertook charitable work and campaigns for social reform. For example, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence worked with the West London Mission; Helena Swanwick helped to run social clubs and working girls' clubs in Manchester; and Mary Sheepshanks was involved with the Women's University Settlement in Southwark. These women went on to become leading figures in the militant and constitutional branches of the votes for women campaign and were major players in the foundation of WIL.<sup>238</sup> Social work allowed women to permeate the boundary between the public and private spheres and helped to consolidate their understanding of female subjection as they experienced first-hand the conditions facing working women.<sup>239</sup> Humanitarianism, much like social work in the nineteenth century, offered women a space to work outside the formal political arena.<sup>240</sup> Recent literature explores the intersection between humanitarianism and identity, particularly the role of voluntary associations in creating a collective sense of belonging.<sup>241</sup> Relief work by women helped to create a sense of identity, influenced by local, national, international and imperial contexts. In addition, early personal connections between these women and other female social workers and activists, helped to facilitate the growth of broader activist networks.<sup>242</sup>

The outbreak of war in 1914 changed the nature of humanitarian relief work. For many suffragists, relief work allowed them to demonstrate their patriotism and, therefore prove themselves worthy of the right to vote. Millicent Garrett Fawcett endorsed the

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<sup>238</sup> Martz, 'Mary Neal and Emmeline Pethick', pp. 620–41; Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 159; Oldfield, *Spinsters of This Parish*, pp. 32–64.

<sup>239</sup> Katherine Storr, *Excluded from the Record: Women, Refugees and Relief, 1914–1929* (Bern: Peter Lang Academic Publishers, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>240</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 86.

<sup>241</sup> O'Sullivan, Hilton and Fiori, 'Humanitarianisms in Context', p. 10.

<sup>242</sup> Pethick Lawrence, *My Part in a Changing World*, p. 88; Martz, 'Mary Neal and Emmeline Pethick', p. 625; Gill, 'Networks of Concern', p. 827.

suspension of suffrage campaigns and recommended ‘the devotion of its organisation to various efforts which have for their object the sustaining of the vital strength of the nation’.<sup>243</sup> The NUWSS supported various relief efforts – such as the Scottish Women’s Hospitals, Polish Relief Scheme and relief for Belgium and Serbia – alongside its campaigns in support of the national economy and patriotic housekeeping drives.<sup>244</sup> Similarly, the IWSA organised the International Women’s Relief Committee from its headquarters in London. Sheepshanks – editor of *Jus Suffragii* – articulated that the association’s work would reveal ‘the injustice of excluding women from all voice in deciding national policy’.<sup>245</sup> Sheepshanks was active in the formation of WIL and served as WILPF’s International Secretary between 1927 and 1929. Although the Relief Committee only lasted a year, it sought to help the ‘innocent victims of war’, escorted women and children ‘enemy aliens’ to the continent and provided assistance to Belgian refugees.<sup>246</sup> Gill argues that the reception of Belgian refugees in Huddersfield ‘anticipated interwar internationalist and humanitarian concerns’.<sup>247</sup> Florence Lockwood, who became a WIL member, supported Belgian refugees in the West Yorkshire town and initiated a repatriation fund to facilitate their return at the end of the war. Lockwood, like many WIL members also became active in the Save the Children Fund during the 1920s. Gill notes the ‘overlapping composition and outlook of the British Women’s International League, the UDC, and the SCF’.<sup>248</sup> Lockwood’s activism demonstrates the nature of WIL’s work with other activists on a local level.

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<sup>243</sup> Millicent Garrett Fawcett, Speech Notes, 23 November 1915. TWL@LSE, 7MGF/E/4.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid.

<sup>245</sup> IWSA, *Jus Suffragii* (September 1914), p. 4.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid.

<sup>247</sup> Rebecca Gill, ‘‘Brave Little Belgium’ Arrives in Huddersfield ... Voluntary Action, Local Politics and the History of International Relief Work’, *Immigrants & Minorities*, 34:2 (2016), p. 133.

<sup>248</sup> Ibid, p. 143.

WILPF did not officially organise relief work, as its main campaigns were political and educational. Swanwick argued that relief work would shore up ‘the age-old notion that women had no concern in public life except to wipe up the mess made by men’.<sup>249</sup> Nevertheless, a number of WIL members did assist the victims of war. Courtney worked in Salonika with the Serbian Relief Fund in 1916 and the Friends War Victims Relief Committee in Vienna at the end of the war. Hilda Clark – a GP from a prominent Quaker family – and Edith Pye – Superintendent of District Nurses in London, who became an International Chair of WILPF in the 1930s – set up a maternity hospital in France. Pye was awarded the Chevalier de la Légion d’Honneur for her direction of ‘La Maternité Anglaise’.<sup>250</sup> In 1919, Clark led a Quaker expedition to Vienna and worked with members of the American Friends Service Committee, including Emma Cadbury and Dorothy Detzer who became prominent in the US section of WILPF during the interwar period. Siân Roberts argues that networks of women undertaking humanitarian work flourished in Vienna. She notes that Quaker relief worker Francesca Wilson met Courtney, Clark, Pye and Royden whilst working in Austria. These connections influenced Wilson’s politics, leading her to travel to Macedonia in 1929 on behalf of WILPF.<sup>251</sup> Similarly, Clark travelled extensively – including trips to Poland, Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria, Turkey, the Balkans and the Middle East – often accompanied by Courtney.<sup>252</sup> Likewise, Pye and French WILPF member Camille Drevet embarked on a WILPF mission to Indo-China, China and Japan in 1927.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup> Swanwick, *I Have Been Young*, p. 315.

<sup>250</sup> Oldfield, *Women Humanitarians*, p. 178.

<sup>251</sup> Roberts, *Place, Life Histories and the Politics of Relief*, p. 286.

<sup>252</sup> Kathleen D. Courtney, Passports. TWL@LSE, 7KDC/K/04.

<sup>253</sup> Camille Drevet and Edith M. Pye, Report of the W.I.L.P.F. Delegation to China (Geneva: WILPF, 1928). WILPF, I:B, Reel 9.

Pye credited Clark's love for humanity – derived from her Quaker faith – as the chief influence on her humanitarian activism.<sup>254</sup> Religious groups had traditionally been providers of charity during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the Society of Friends continued this tradition during the Great War. Within WIL, the Quaker influence was strong as a number of its leading members had connections to the Society of Friends.<sup>255</sup> Katherine Storr demonstrates that there was a 'crucial intersection' between suffragists and the Society. Similarly, a shared concern for humanity facilitated the connection between WIL and the Society of Friends – although not all humanitarians in WIL were Quakers. Just a month after the congress at The Hague, the Society of Friends held a peace conference in London. The Quaker Executive Committee included WIL member Isabella Ford and Charles Roden Buxton.<sup>256</sup> Buxton was also a founding member of the UDC, and thus connected to WIL through fellow UDC members Swanwick and Ford in this capacity. In addition, he was married to Dorothy Jebb Buxton, who became a member of WIL and co-founded the Save the Children Fund with her sister, Eglantyne Jebb.<sup>257</sup>

WIL was not a humanitarian association but it did share some of the ideals of humanitarian groups, including a commitment to humanity and internationalism. This allowed WIL members to participate in humanitarian campaigns through fundraising and lobbying for political intervention into humanitarian crises. Furthermore, individual members of WIL were also members of associations such as the Friends Emergency Committee and the Save the Children Fund, which facilitated collaborative action between WIL and the humanitarian movement.

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<sup>254</sup> Edith Pye, *War and Its Aftermath, Letters from Hilda Clark, M.B., B.S. from France, Austria and the Near East, 1914–1924* (London: Friends Book Centre, 1956), p. 125.

<sup>255</sup> Quaker members of WIL included Hilda Clark, Edith Pye, Isabella Ford, Sophia Sturge and Dorothy Jebb Buxton.

<sup>256</sup> Storr, *Excluded from the Record*, p. 12.

<sup>257</sup> Clare Mulley, *The Woman Who Saved the Children: A Biography of Eglantyne Jebb, Founder of Save the Children* (Oxford: Oneworld Publishers, 2009), p. 197.

### *Collaborative action: post-war relief*

Dorothy Buxton's wartime column 'Notes from the Foreign Press' translated items from foreign newspapers into English to challenge widespread anti-German sentiment and xenophobia in the jingoistic press. Buxton recruited a team of translators, including her husband's secretary, Mosa Anderson – who served on the Executive Committee of WIL from 1928.<sup>258</sup> The column was published in the *Cambridge Magazine*, which was edited by C.K. Ogden, an anti-militarist who had penned the 1915 'Militarism versus Feminism' pamphlet.<sup>259</sup> Aided by her husband's connections in the Liberal party, Buxton was permitted to import foreign newspapers during the war, avoiding the censorship of DORA.<sup>260</sup> Influenced by the reports, a group of the Buxtons' associates formed the Fight the Famine Council to lobby government about the effects of the Allied Blockade. The Council drew on a web of contacts, including WIL members such as Lady Courtney of Penwith, Marian Ellis and Maude Royden.<sup>261</sup> It also included Charles Buxton's political acquaintances, such as Ramsay MacDonald, Leonard Woolf, Sydney and Beatrice Webb, Seebohm Rowntree, Mary Macarthur, C.P. Scott, George Lansbury and Norman Angell.<sup>262</sup> The Council's principal aim was to increase awareness in Britain of the situation in Europe and to 'hasten the relaxation of the blockade'.<sup>263</sup> WIL supported the Fight the Famine Council by advertising its events in its *Monthly News Sheet* and significant WIL members

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<sup>258</sup> Ibid., p. 215; WIL, *Thirteenth Yearly Report, February 1928–February 1929* (London: WIL, 1929), p. 1. WILPF, III, Reel 69.

<sup>259</sup> The pamphlet expressed the feminist pacifist view that militarism posed a direct threat to the progress of the women's movement. IWSA, *Jus Suffragii* (March 1915). See Chapter One.

<sup>260</sup> Mulley, *The Woman Who Saved the Children*, p. 212.

<sup>261</sup> Marian Cripps née Ellis – later known as Lady Parmoor – served on WIL's Executive Committee throughout the 1920s. She was also President of WIL from 1950 until her death in 1952. Along with her sister, she financed the NCF. She was President of the World YWCA 1924–1928 and a member of FOR. She was also connected to Lady Courtney of Penwith and Beatrice Webb through her marriage Charles Cripps in 1919, when she also became stepmother to Stafford Cripps, Labour MP. Oldfield, *Women Humanitarians*, pp. 66–67.

<sup>262</sup> 'Hunger in Central Europe, a "Fight the Famine Council"', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 February 1919, p. 3; 'The Fight the Famine Council', *Manchester Guardian*, 15 July 1919, p. 8; Mulley, *The Woman Who Saved the Children*, p. 228.

<sup>263</sup> 'Hunger in Central Europe, a "Fight the Famine Council"', *Manchester Guardian*, 13 February 1919, p. 3.



championed the cause. For example, Margaret Bondfield addressed the Fight the Famine Council's International Economic Conference in 1920 alongside Norman Angell and Fridtjof Nansen on the issue of the blockade.<sup>264</sup>

Like WIL, the Fight the Famine Council was a political and educational pressure group that collected information, lobbied government and informed public opinion through mass meetings, propaganda and press campaigns across the country. However, Jebb and Buxton became convinced that direct action was required to provide relief for the victims of the European famine. During a WIL demonstration, Jebb and Barbara Ayrton Gould – a WIL member – were arrested for distributing leaflets that contained startling images of starving Austrian children, which had not been approved by the wartime censor.<sup>265</sup> This demonstration led to the formation of the Save the Children Fund. Jebb established Save the Children's headquarters in Geneva 'to symbolize Save the Children's separation from power politics' and to be closer to the League of Nations.<sup>266</sup> Thus, Geneva hosted both WILPF and the Save the Children Fund's headquarters. Much like its precursor – the Fight the Famine Council – Save the Children attracted a range of WIL members.<sup>267</sup> Baughan notes that the Save the Children Fund and WIL were connected through 'personal and political networks'.<sup>268</sup> Likewise, Patricia Sellick argues that the success of the Save the Children Fund as a social movement 'lay in the networks and symbols of the political culture of the anti-war movement'.<sup>269</sup> Local WIL branches supported the Fund, in particular they organised fundraising activities. For example, Leeds WIL reported that they were convinced that humanitarian efforts would help to build positive international

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<sup>264</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1920), p. 3.

<sup>265</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1919), p. 3.

<sup>266</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 86.

<sup>267</sup> Apparently moved by Jebb's self-defence in court, the magistrate paid the five-pound fine, which became the first donation to the Save the Children Fund. Mulley, *The Woman Who Saved the Children*, p. 242.

<sup>268</sup> Baughan, 'Every Citizen of Empire', p. 120.

<sup>269</sup> Patricia Sellick, 'Responding to Children Affected by Armed Conflict: A Case Study of the Save the Children Fund (1919–1999)' (PhD Thesis, University of Bradford, 2001), p. 18.

relations between Britain and its former enemies, to create an atmosphere of peace. Led by Isabella Ford, the branch sent parcels of clothing and money to the ‘famine-stricken districts’ and held garden parties to raise money for the Save the Children Fund, collecting £180 in 1920 to purchase two cows to send to the famine-stricken city of Frankfurt.<sup>270</sup>

WIL’s humanitarian action continued into the interwar years. During the early 1920s, the association directed its concern towards Russia. After years of war and revolution, a harvest failure, culminating in a devastating famine, hit the nation. Humanitarian relief agencies, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, Save the Children Fund, the Society of Friends and the American Relief Administration, founded an International Committee for Russian Relief (ICRR) in response to the crisis. Fridtjof Nansen – the Norwegian polar explorer, who had coordinated the repatriation of prisoners of war after the Great War – was selected to coordinate the campaign.<sup>271</sup> Nansen’s Office for Refugees – the High Commission for Refugees – was ‘one of the League of Nations’ most prominent humanitarian achievements’.<sup>272</sup> WIL hoped that Nansen’s appointment would be ‘a guarantee that part of the work at least will be above politics’, as anti-communist sentiments were strong and only Norway was prepared to lend money to Russia.<sup>273</sup> Humanitarian idealism and connections to the labour movement increased WIL’s concern for the Russian famine. Marshall attended the ICRR’s meeting in Geneva and secured WIL representation at the International Relief Committee conference, 15 August 1921.<sup>274</sup>

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<sup>270</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1920), p. 4.

<sup>271</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1921), p. 3. Nansen also served as the League’s first High Commissioner for Refugees from 1920 to 1930 and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1922 for his work leading the repatriation of Prisoners of War.

<sup>272</sup> Daniel Laqua, ‘Inside the Humanitarian Cloud: Causes and Motivations to Help Friends and Strangers’, *Journal of Modern European History*, 112:2 (2014), p. 182.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid; Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism*, p.192.

<sup>274</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1921), p. 3.

WIL also organised a campaign to place pressure on the British government to provide aid to Russia. In 1922, the association led a deputation of women's organisations to the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George.<sup>275</sup> Representatives of eighteen national women's societies signed WIL's letter to the PM, which was circulated to the press. Similarly, WIL organised a meeting of women's societies at Kingsway Hall on 29 March 1923 to demand that the Government make an adequate grant to relieve the Russian famine. Ruth Fry – a member of the Friends Emergency and War Victims Relief Committee – presented a first-hand account of the situation in Russia and Marshall highlighted the disparity in British expenditure. She claimed that Britain spent a huge amount on drink, the army and the navy each year and 'yet [the Government] could not spare half a million to help Russia'.<sup>276</sup> Speeches also came from WIL members Pethick Lawrence and Lady Parmoor, as well as trade unionist Madeleine Symons, Eleanor Barton representing the Women's Co-operative Guild and Mrs. Nicholl, 'a Russian lady'.<sup>277</sup>

In Newcastle, the branch collected over one hundred signatures from leading religious, civic and education figures urging relief for Russia. The branch also organised a public demonstration on 5 May 1923, which included the procession of banners and a speech by Major Barnes, the Liberal MP for Newcastle East. The meeting was chaired by Mary Trevelyan, President of Newcastle WIL, who was also the half-sister of Gertrude Bell – well known for her work in the Middle East. Mary's husband was Charles Trevelyan, one of the co-founders of the UDC and MP for Newcastle Central, 1922–1931, showing, again, the interconnectedness of activist associations through personal connections.<sup>278</sup>

Likewise, the Barnet branch hosted a meeting on 'Russia To-day', which included a talk

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<sup>275</sup> The deputation was made up of representatives from the Fabian Women's Group, the Federation of Women's Civil Servants, the National Council of Women, NUSEC, National Women Citizen's Association, Standing Joint Committee of Industrial Women's Organisations, the Women's Freedom League and the Young Women's Christian Association. WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (March 1922), p. 2.

<sup>276</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1923), p. 2

<sup>277</sup> Ibid.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid, p. 4.

from Evelyn Sharp on her experience as a relief-worker in Moscow and the branch collected donations of clothing for the Friends' Emergency Committee.<sup>279</sup> WIL regularly reported on conditions in Russia, Ukraine and Crimea and distributed information from the ICRR to its members through its *Monthly News Sheet*.<sup>280</sup>

Nonetheless, WIL's humanitarianism often upheld imperial tropes despite its reputation as a progressive radical association. Much like the Save the Children Fund, WIL's attention turned to Africa in the late 1920s.<sup>281</sup> As argued in the previous chapter, despite WIL's progressive stance on colonialism, it often evoked a sense of imperial duty and employed paternalistic rhetoric.<sup>282</sup> At times, WIL reproduced notions of the British Empire as a civilizing force. The association was concerned with the education of women in Kenya to foster 'an all-round development of mind, body, character and religious sense' and provide training in 'mothercraft to cope with the appallingly high infant mortality'. Although this project urged education as a tool to overcome inequality between men and women, WIL's aims also employed language of civilizational hierarchy, which has been illustrated in Chapter Four. For example, WIL suggested that humanitarian action in Kenya would help Africans progress from 'savagery'.<sup>283</sup> As scholars of humanitarianism have noted, associations like the Save the Children Fund embodied an 'imperial humanitarianism', which on occasion was based on paternalism. As such, the discourse of progress was often based on Western ideals.<sup>284</sup> Similarly, imperial legacies influenced transnationalism, which facilitated network building and influenced the priorities of social movements, such as WIL.<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>279</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1922), p. 3.

<sup>280</sup> Ibid.

<sup>281</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (August 1931), p. 1; Baughan, 'Every Citizen of Empire', p. 134.

<sup>282</sup> Beers, 'Advocating for a Feminist Internationalism between the Wars', p. 204.

<sup>283</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (October 1925), p. 3.

<sup>284</sup> Barnett, *Empire of Humanity*, p. 8; Skinner and Lester, 'Humanitarianism and Empire', p. 731.

<sup>285</sup> Grant, Levine and Trentmann, *Beyond Sovereignty*, p. 3.

WIL's links to the Save the Children Fund and the International Committee for Russian Relief demonstrates the extent of its network, which incorporated humanitarian circles. Although not all WIL members were humanitarians, an idealistic commitment to peace and internationalism led many of them to relief work. Overlapping membership, personal and political connections alongside shared concerns allowed WIL to enter the transnational 'networks of concern'.<sup>286</sup>

### **Conclusion**

This overview has revealed the range of voluntary associations and social movements that WIL co-operated with during the Great War and interwar years. As such, the chapter illustrates the extent of WIL's activism during the interwar years, which incorporated multifarious campaigns and issues. As a feminist pacifist association, WIL's concerns for equality, freedom and justice extended further than its principal aims of securing peace and women's rights. WIL's broad concerns allowed it to co-operate and collaborate with a range of other voluntary associations connected to the women's and peace movements; the labour movement; liberal internationalism and humanitarian relief organisations. Moreover, informal and formal personal connections between activists brought WIL into close contact with a network of activists in a range of movements.

Shared constituencies, particularly members of WIL's Executive Committee demonstrate the intricacy of the interactions and social ties between WIL and other activist networks and alliances. This chapter therefore has also highlighted the centrality of a core network of WIL activists, in particular Helena Swanwick, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence, Catherine Marshall, Edith Pye, Isabella Ford, Kathleen Courtney, Lady Courtney of Penwith and Hilda Clark. The chapter has also exposed a number of secondary figures who remained connected to WIL through intermittent membership of the Executive Committee

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<sup>286</sup> Gill, 'Networks of Concern', pp. 281–4.

and through WIL's exchanges with other associations, including Ellen Wilkinson, Margaret Bondfield, Maude Royden, Buxton and Chrystal Macmillan. Both the core and secondary group of WIL activists campaigned throughout the period for range of different, yet related causes.

This chapter has extended Rupp's imagery of the 'textured cloth', which she used to describe the intricate connections within the international women's movement.<sup>287</sup> WIL was part of a 'textured cloth' that included NUWSS, WFL, supranational women's alliances, UDC, NCF, National Peace Council, Women's World Committee Against War and Fascism, the Labour Party, trade unions, the Women's Peace Crusade, WCG, LNU, Fight the Famine Council, Save the Children Fund, the Society of Friends, and the ICRR, amongst others. These connections facilitated collaborative action on a number of campaigns, including lobbying the League of Nations to raise women's status; No More War demonstrations; an emphasis on the role of mothers in creating peace; the Peace Ballot; and the campaign to alleviate the Russian famine in the 1920s. These connections and shared interests incorporated both national and international spheres.<sup>288</sup> Internationalism was a major influence on WIL and the majority of associations it co-operated.

Overall, this analysis has highlighted the nuances of WIL's activism during the interwar years by demonstrating that it was more than simply a feminist-pacifist association. This chapter has shown how closely related the campaigns for peace, feminism, humanitarian relief, internationalism and socialism were for many of WIL's members. Moreover, WIL was part of both a vibrant national and international nexus of activists

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<sup>287</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*, p.7.

<sup>288</sup> Carlier, 'Forgotten Transnational Connections and National Contexts', p. 503.

during the interwar years that used both the national and international political spheres to further their shared goals for peace, internationalism and social justice.

## Conclusion

In 1935, WIL celebrated the twentieth anniversary of its formative international congress of women held at The Hague. Looking back, the association highlighted its ‘heritage of courage and faith and devotion, or clear-sighted vision, and the wisdom which only “the understanding heart” can give’.<sup>1</sup> Catherine Marshall described the momentous gathering in the Netherlands, calling on the association to remember that

Amidst the submerging flood of national and patriotic feeling the women of twelve countries were at one in feeling that the claims of Humanity were stronger and more urgent than any claim of a State upon its citizens, and that a world in the throes of war demanded of them a service other than that which was being demanded of them by their warring Governments.<sup>2</sup>

Faced in 1935 with similar ‘grave and difficult world problems’ – namely the crisis between Italy and Abyssinia – the association was inspired and stimulated by a ‘perusal of the history of the early days of our League’.<sup>3</sup> This crisis point for WIL, which led many of its founding members to question their pacifism and caused rifts between national sections of WILPF, is the notional end point of this thesis. Although the association continued to function after the Second World War – indeed remaining active through to the present day – 1935 precipitated an end to the hopes that internationalism could prevent war, thus bringing the formative period of WIL’s history to a close.

By contrast, at the time of its hundredth anniversary in 2015, the international association’s focus was less on the problems and uncertainty which it had faced and more on the momentous achievements of those ‘courageous and far-sighted women’ who

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<sup>1</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (May 1935), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



gathered at The Hague during the Great War.<sup>4</sup> The association's historical consciousness of its foundation during the Great War has led to a number of innovative commemorative projects. For instance, the Heritage Lottery funded film *Dangerous Women* focuses on the attempts British women made to attend the 1915 congress.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, historians have also taken an interest in the association's centenary as well as the trajectory of WILPF's feminist-pacifist analysis and influence on international institutions – most notably the United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 1325 adopted in October 2000, which facilitates the inclusion of women at peace negotiations.<sup>6</sup> Ingrid Sharp describes WILPF as 'one of the most influential international women's organizations campaigning for peace at work today'.<sup>7</sup> She highlights the similarities between WILPF's 1919 agenda and current discourse on gender, peace, security and human rights. Sharp argues that WILPF's critique was progressive and radical, but has still to be fully realised, despite the implementation of UNSCR 1325.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, a number of scholars have been or continue to be active in peace activism, which has influenced their work on the history of the association. For instance, feminist scholar and activist, Cynthia Cockburn is a member of WILPF. She authored the organisation's 2015 Manifesto as well as covering its history in her text *From Where We Stand*. Likewise, Harriet Hyman Alonso links her own feminist pacifism to her interest in the history of the women's peace movement.<sup>9</sup> Notwithstanding evident public and scholarly interest in WILPF's history, this study is the first in-depth account of its British

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<sup>4</sup> WILPF, *Manifesto* (Geneva: WILPF, 2015), p. 1. See also 'Centenary stand: female activists head for The Hague to set a new peace agenda', *The Guardian*, 27 April 2015.

<sup>5</sup> UK WILPF, *These Dangerous Women* (London: WILPF, 2015).

<sup>6</sup> Sharp, 'Feminist Peace Activism 1915 and 2010', pp. 155–80; Helen McCarthy, 'Pacifism and Feminism in the Great War', *History Today*, 2015. <http://www.historytoday.com/helen-mccarthy/pacifism-and-feminism-great-war>, accessed 11 October 2016.

<sup>7</sup> Sharp, 'Feminist Peace Activism 1915 and 2010', p. 115.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 174

<sup>9</sup> Cynthia Cockburn, *From Where We Stand: War, Women's Activism and Feminist Analysis* (London & New York: Zed Books, 2007), pp. 132–138; Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Woman's Issue*, p. 4.

section, and it therefore fills a significant gap in the historiography of women's activism during the Great War and interwar years.

This thesis has explored the formation of WIL in 1915 and its early work through the Great War and interwar years until 1935. WIL's feminism was broad and encompassed concerns for peace and internationalism, which it considered to be inherently intertwined with its goals for equality. Rather than diverting activists away from their feminist campaigns, members of WIL claimed the authority of women to speak out on a diverse range of issues, and often targeted their campaigns at the newly formed League of Nations. WIL was committed to internationalism as both a principle and as a method for organising its own association and the post-Great War world. However, the influence of national interests was pervasive, leading to tensions between WIL and WILPF.

The historiography of the women's movement has begun to demonstrate the multifarious ways in which the British women's movement remained active after the extension of the franchise in 1918, and this thesis is a contribution to this body of literature.<sup>10</sup> Notably, WIL was part of an intricate web of activism, as its members and interests overlapped with other women's organisations, peace societies, labour groups, liberal internationalists and humanitarian relief networks. Moreover, it builds on the influential work by Leila Rupp and Karen Offen, which considers the international women's movement during the interwar years.<sup>11</sup> This project shows that women's activism at the international level was an important aspect of female political interventions.<sup>12</sup> Thus, the thesis has demonstrated how activists asserted a role for women in the sphere of international politics to discuss war, peace and foreign policy.

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<sup>10</sup> Beaumont, 'Citizens Not Feminists', p. 37; Thane, 'What Difference Did the Vote Make?'.

<sup>11</sup> Rupp, *Worlds of Women*; Offen, *European Feminisms*.

<sup>12</sup> Pedersen, 'Metaphors of the Schoolroom'; Sluga and James, *Women, Diplomacy and International Politics*.

This study's focus on WIL has unpicked the interactions between national, international, imperial and, at times, local influences and interests upon activists, as well as the relationship between feminism, pacifism and internationalism. The findings have implications for future research, which will benefit from further exploring the bonds between national and international within international women's organisations. Moreover, further research might extend the enquiry beyond the Second World War, for instance exploring the developments from 1945 to the first women's liberation conference in 1970. Such an investigation would contribute to the bridging of the gap between the suffrage movement and the women's liberation movement, or the so-called first and second waves of feminism. Furthermore, such a study would contribute to the literature mapping the trajectory in international governance from the League of Nations to the United Nations.<sup>13</sup>

### **Negotiating the national and international**

Formed at the international level, WILPF created its own national sections and scholars have recognised the scope of the transnational association during the interwar years.<sup>14</sup> Yet, WILPF is examined alongside other significant international women's organisations, particularly ICW and IWSA, which has concealed the distinct nature of its transnational structure and aims. Moreover, most work focusses on either the national or the international level of the interwar women's movement and therefore overlooks the relationship between the international organisation and its national affiliates. Internationalism did not subsume nationalism, national interests or national identities. As Glenda Sluga has identified, the national and international were 'entangled ways of thinking about modernity and progress and politics' throughout the twentieth century.<sup>15</sup> Despite its commitment to constructing an international association, WIL's membership

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<sup>13</sup> Eisenberg, 'The Status of Women'.

<sup>14</sup> Bussey and Tims, *Pioneers for Peace*, p. 32; Offen, *European Feminisms*, p. 360.

<sup>15</sup> Sluga, *Internationalism in the Age of Nationalism*, p. 3.

was dependent on British nationality and national sections played a significant role in fulfilling WILPF's aims. Yet, the association believed that the national and international complemented one another and went further than other international women's organisations to understand the issue of nationality, promoting the values of both female and national self-determination.<sup>16</sup>

This study has demonstrated how the aims and goals of WILPF were pursued by the British national section. It has also pinpointed occasions when WIL challenged the international Executive Committee. Overall, national sections of WILPF shared a set of interests and goals, which were agreed upon at the association's biennial international congresses. Nonetheless, at times, national interests threatened the unity of the association. In particular, differences in opinion over how internationalism would function in practice permeated WILPF's discussions. Debate focused on whether the international association should be governed by a strong international Executive Committee elected to represent the entire association, or whether the Executive Committee should be made up of national representatives to ensure that all branches were accounted for. In 1935, this issue – along with the association's response to fascism and collective security – threatened to divide WILPF. WIL voted on whether to remain a national section of the association or continue as an autonomous organisation. The British branch opted to remain a national section of WILPF, and the international association remains intact, continuing to operate in the present day, albeit under the title UK WILPF rather than WIL. This episode, however, illustrates the prevalence of national interests and identities within a transnational association, such as WILPF.

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<sup>16</sup> Sluga, 'Female and National Self-Determination', p. 496; Zimmermann, 'The Challenge of Multinational Empire', p. 87.

### **An activist nexus**

Through overlapping membership and shared interests, WIL co-operated frequently with other women's and peace organisations, as well as humanitarian societies, liberal internationalists and labour and socialist women. This analysis reveals personal and associational connections between a range of British and international activists. Far from being at the periphery of interwar campaigns, WIL members were at the heart of a broader nexus of political and humanitarian activism. Activists such as Helena Swanwick, Kathleen Courtney, Emmeline Pethick Lawrence and Ellen Wilkinson are prominent figures in the history of British and international interwar politics. Often neglected as a small band of middle class suffragists, WIL's broad campaigns and well-connected personnel reveal the extent of the association's activism. Moreover, drawing on theories of social movements, this thesis shows how the women's movement operated within 'advocacy networks'.<sup>17</sup> This focus on WIL has also highlighted how social movements evolved through diverse political interactions. Thus, this study contributes to a growing field of literature, which demonstrates how the women's movement developed during and after the Great War, whilst also drawing on the similarities and connections with the earlier women's movement.<sup>18</sup>

### **Feminist pacifism**

Ideas surrounding the concept of peace as a women's issue have attracted much attention from historians, as well as social and political scientists. Nonetheless, many scholars have questioned the idea that women possess some kind of innate pacifism.<sup>19</sup> This thesis offers a fresh perspective on feminism and pacifism, which were often understood to be inherently

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<sup>17</sup> Sikkink and Keck, *Activists Beyond Borders*, p. 6.

<sup>18</sup> Brown, 'The Truest Form of Patriotism'.

<sup>19</sup> Carroll, 'Feminism and Pacifism'; Hyman Alonso, *Peace as a Woman's Issue*.

intertwined by the activists themselves.<sup>20</sup> WIL connected patriarchal dominance with militarism, conflict, war and the suppression of women. Its feminist campaigns were broad in scope and extended beyond the movement for the extension of the franchise. The association was concerned with the establishment of ‘moral force’ as a means of governing international relations.<sup>21</sup> This in turn, WIL members claimed, would secure equality, self-determination and peace. Thus, WIL’s feminism was distinctly pacifist, and its pacifism was feminist.

Although this thesis has focused primarily on the association’s two main goals – women’s rights and peace – the nature of WIL’s all encompassing, interconnected activism has led this thesis to also consider its broader campaigns surrounding issues such as the administration of mandates and colonies, humanitarian relief, labour law, and international relations, thus demonstrating the vitality of interwar feminist activism. This thesis, therefore contributes to our understanding of the transformation of feminist activism during and after the Great War and interwar years. The interwar women’s movement was particularly focused on women’s contribution to the international political sphere and the League of Nations became crucial for feminist campaigns. Nonetheless, this thesis also demonstrates how the women’s movement continued to campaign for traditional feminist concerns, such as suffrage and citizenship, the nationality of married women, as well as contributing to the debates surrounding women’s work and protective legislation.

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In November 1935, WIL prepared for a General Election. Drawing on the familiar techniques of the women’s movement, the association used questionnaires to lobby

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<sup>20</sup> Liddington, *The Road to Greenham Common*.

<sup>21</sup> Maude Royden, *War and the Women’s Movement* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1915). TWL@LSE, 7AMR/2/30.

candidates and encouraged women voters to make an informed decision at the ballot box. WIL acknowledged that 'Peace [was] is in the balance', referring, in particular, to the issues of collective security and rearmament during the Abyssinian crisis.<sup>22</sup> With its origins in the pre-war campaign for women's suffrage, WIL continued to lobby for political representation into the 1930s, arguing that 'the General Election may be turned into a great opportunity of showing strength of peace feeling in the country'.<sup>23</sup> Employing the infamous language of the suffrage campaign, WIL believed that it was women's duty 'by word and deed to make it [peace] so'.<sup>24</sup> The organisation's campaigns and the persistent efforts of its members offer manifold examples of the ways in which activists asserted the authority of women to speak on the national and international political stage about international relations, peace and women's rights.

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<sup>22</sup> WIL, *Monthly News Sheet* (November 1935), p. 1.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.





## Appendices

### Appendix A: WIL Executive Committee, 1915–1935

This table includes office-holders in WIL's Executive Committee who are mentioned in this thesis. The shading indicates the years they were on the committee and if they had a formal post. It is not a full record of the entire committee.

Name	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
Ashton, Miss Margaret			VC	VC	VC	VC	VC												VP	VP	
Ayrton Gould, Mrs Barbara					HNS																
Brittain, Miss Vera																			VP	VP	
Clark, Dr Hilda																					
Courtney, Miss Kathleen D.			VC	VC	VC	VC	VC			HFS	HFS	HFS	HFS	HFS	HFS	HFS	HFS	HFS	HFS	HFS	
Duncan Harris, Mrs								VC													C
Holtby, Mrs Winifred																			VP	VP	
Innes, Mrs Kathleen E.				S			S							VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	VC	C	HS
Marshall, Miss Catherine E.		HS																			
Parnoor, Lady Manian					VC																
Penwith, Lady Courtney of						HT	HT	HT	HT	HT	HT	HT	HT								
Pethick Lawrence, Mrs Emmeline		T	T	T	T														VP		
Royden, Dr A. Maude			VC																VP		
Sheepshanks, Mrs Mary																		HNS	HNS	HNS	
Snowden, Mrs Phillip				VC																	
Swanwick, Mrs Helena M.		C	C	C	C	C	C	C	P	P	P	P	P	P	P						
Wilkinson, Miss Ellen																			VP		
Williams, Dr Ethel								VC								VC	VC		VP	VP	
Woodman, Miss Dorothy											S	S	S	S							

Key	
P	President
VP	Vice-President
C	Chairman
VC	Vice-Chairman
T	Treasurer
HT	Honorary Treasurer
HNS	Honorary National Secretary
HFS	Honorary Foreign Relations Secretary
HS	Honorary Secretary
S	Secretary

## Appendix B: WIL Executive Committee, 1915–1935

This table shows other significant members of WIL’s Executive Committee referred to in the thesis.

Name	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935
Barton, Mrs Eleanor																					
Bennett, Miss Louie																					
Bondfield, Miss Margaret G.																					
Bruce Glasier, Mrs Katherine																					
Buxton, Mrs Charles																					
Despard, Mrs Charlotte																					
Ford, Miss Isabella O.																					
Harrison, Miss Agatha																					
Hobhouse, Miss Eleanor																					
Leaf, Miss Emily																					
Macmillan, Miss Chrystal																					
Pankhurst, Miss Sylvia																					
Pye, Miss Edith																					
Salter, Mrs Alfred																					
Trevelyan, Mrs C.P.																					
Ward, Miss Helen																					

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